

‘The English People believes itself to be free: it is gravely mistaken; it is free only during the election of MPs; as soon as the Members are elected the people is enslaved.’ J J ROUSSEAU

## So today is freedom day

Spec. Anthony Bevins  
Political Editor

The country's political leaders last night handed the election over to the people, with appeals for their support in a ballot that will either return Tony Blair, at 43, as the youngest Prime Minister for a century, or give John Major the first fifth term since 1928. Mr Major repeated his warning that change was dangerous, saying: “I understand why some people may find the argument for change attractive. Eighteen years is a long time, the electorate know us, wants and all. And it's easy to overlook the achievements. But if you're one of the many who have still to make up your minds, with all the force I possess, I say don't fall for it. Don't be taken in. One cross in the wrong place on the ballot paper.”

British democracy can certainly improve, but it's alive and kicking.

Give it a go  
Leading article, page 21

per tomorrow could wreck everything we have achieved together.

At his morning press conference, the Conservative leader said nine times: “It's too good to give up”, adding: “In our carelessness moment, don't throw our success away.”

But with the opinion polls repeating their forecast of a landslide Labour victory, Mr Blair was maintaining his insistence that nothing could be taken for granted. He said he wanted to rebuild the voters' trust by offering a 10-point contract, including central pledges on tax, education, health, crime, sleaze, and Europe.

He told *The Independent*: “The very reason we have this contract with the British people is precisely so that we can try and rebuild the trust.”

“One of the most frustrating things for us, since we've been in opposition for 18 years is that people say that all the politicians are all the same. Whatever we vote, it doesn't make any difference.”

“It's not the case that we can't make any difference. The promises that we have made are specific, they are limited. I often point out they are limited, but they are specific, and if we deliver on those then I think we are entitled to trust.”

However, Mr Blair then added: “If we don't deliver on those, then we won't be.”

Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader, released a letter to two million floating voters in which he trumped his earlier claim that his party was on the verge of a major breakthrough.

He said the Liberal Democrats stood “on the threshold of an historic victory ... The only vote that will make a difference for you and your family's future is a vote for the Liberal Democrats.”

The messages were reiterated during the day as the leaders bantam around the country, with Mr Major at one point being harangued by Labour supporters during a walkabout in Stevenage, a Labour target.

Mr Blair said in an impromptu speech at Stockton market, another Labour target: “You either wake up on Friday 2 May with another five years of the most discredited and sleazy government. If you don't want that, come out and support us tomorrow and end up with a new Labour government and a better future for Britain.”

But Mr Blair's biggest problem was holding down all triumphalist talk of victory, and the action that would flow from his election tomorrow.

Against that background, senior Labour sources dismissed speculation about Mr Blair's plans for Cabinet-making, something he would turn to tomorrow, in the event of victory.

However, suggestions of a large-scale purge of traditionalist, old Labour frontbenchers were being heavily discounted by well-informed sources yesterday. *The Independent* was told that there would not be a “bloodbath”.

While there are 27 members of the shadow cabinet and only 22 paid Cabinet places available, it would not be possible for Mr Blair to give all his shadow cabinet team full Cabinet rank, but one source said that while some would inevitably be disappointed, Mr Blair would want to have



Art of persuasion: A 1930s painting by Francis Wilson to be auctioned later this month at Bonhams

a good mix of people in his administration.

The source said that contrary to some speculation, Mr Blair was most pleased with his frontbench team, which took account of the balance of the Parliamentary Labour Party. He would want to continue

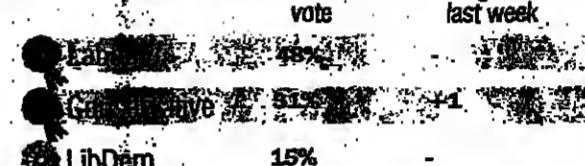
with that top jobs have already been marked out for John Prescott, the deputy who has delivered such stalwart efforts in a countrywide campaign; Gordon Brown, shadow Chancellor and head of the Millbank headquarters campaign team; Robin Cook, the shadow Foreign Secretary; David Blunkett, shadow Education Secretary; Jack Straw, shadow Home Secretary; and Margaret Beckett, who is currently serving as shadow Trade and Industry Secretary.

In the event of a Labour victory, speculation will also be prompted

### THE INDEPENDENT HARRIS POLL

Share of vote

Change since last week



### Labour keeps 17-point lead

The final *Independent*/Harris poll suggests that the widely-expecting closing of the gap in the last days of the campaign has failed to materialise, writes John Renton.

Labour retains a commanding 17-point lead, the sort of advantage in the polls not seen since Margaret Thatcher went to the country in 1983 after the Falklands war and won a 144-seat majority.

If translated into seats, our poll would give Tony Blair more than 400 MPs and a majority of between 173 and 179 in the Commons, although Tom Simpson, managing director of Harris Research, predicts a majority of about 99 if there are as many “shy Tories” and “late swingers” as five years ago.

Harris Research interviewed 1,154 adults face-to-face in their homes on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday this week. The figures exclude 14 per cent who didn't know, wouldn't say or wouldn't vote, who could not be allocated to a party on the basis of how they voted in 1992.

*Independent* poll in full, page 12

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THE INDEPENDENT election '97

about the new prime minister's attitude towards the Civil Service.

It is expected that Mr Blair would want to appoint Jonathan Powell, a former diplomat and his current chief of staff, as his principal private secretary – a post which was once held by his brother, Charles, in Margaret

Thatcher's office. There is also certain to be strong speculation about the successor to Sir Robin Butler, Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service, the most senior mandarin in the country, who is due to retire at the start of next year.

## Asylum cases clear-up

Sam Coates

the day before its dissolution. The scheme was devised in January, but a senior Home Office official told *The Independent*: “It was very convenient that it was set up at a time when no MPs were available to defend constituents.”

The director of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, Claude Morais, has written to Home Office Minister, Timothy Kirkwood, asking him to “come clean” on why the taskforce was set up. He also asked whether it was coincidence that the new system had come into operation just before the dissolution of Parliament.

Once an initial decision on an asylum-seeker has been taken, it is much more difficult to overturn, and applicants lose their right to security benefits.

“It is impossible to tell how successful the scheme has been because Home Office figures on



Andrew Gumbel  
Palermo

### Academic failure

Mike Leigh, awarded one of the film industry's highest honours by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, resigned from the academy because of its failure to acknowledge his films for more than 20 years, he told *The Independent*. Page 3

### Hong Kong pledge

The Chief Executive designate of the new Hong Kong government vowed that a Tiananmen Square-type massacre could never happen in the territory. Page 16

## The Mafia is back

QUICKLY

state. People are once again feeling the presence of the bosses, both big and small.”

The new Mafia may be less violent than the variety that held sway in the late 1980s and early 1990s – there have been no magistrates or politicians shot dead in the streets – but organised crime groups have nevertheless taken advantage of political instability, recession and a weakening magistrature to spread their businesses abroad and extend their climate of fear.

They have capitalised on their considerable financial strength to spread into northern Italy, Europe and establish links in the east, notably in Albania, Turkey and Russia. In addition to drugs, they now trade in arms, nuclear material and toxic waste.

In Italy towns and villages are beset by extortion rackets and

magistrates to prevent further assaults on the status quo.

Most striking is a campaign to discredit Mafia informers, known as *pentiti*, whose testimony has been the foundation of judicial investigations and trials in the past 15 years. Having blown the lid on the secretive workings of Cosa Nostra, the *pentiti* have begun talking in detail about Mafia links with politicians, terrorist groups and shady masonic lodges.

A new draft law on Mafia informers tightens the rules on their collaboration and magistrates fear they will cease to come forward, or retract sworn testimony. Moreover, a law on specially tough prison regimes for Mafia bosses is being relaxed, and two high-security prisons particularly feared by Cosa Nostra are being closed.

Mafia off the chain, page 18

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## news

## significant shorts

## Call for total ban on use of mobile phones while driving

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents has called on the next government to ban the use of mobile phones while driving, even when used completely "hands-free". Motoring organisations have reacted by describing such a ban as "unrealistic" and "unworkable".

The move by the RoSPA follows a meeting of their national road safety committee yesterday morning and two recent court cases involving the use of mobile phones by motorists.

"We are saying that calls should not be made or received on the move," said John Howard, RoSPA's director of safety, "and we plan to take this forward with the police and the government".

The committee members, who are drawn from the Department of Transport, road safety groups, the motoring industry and the Association of Chief Police Officers, will also encourage the police to take stronger action against drivers who use phones. ACPO have said they are "broadly supportive" of the policy, but the RAC said last night it was unrealistic to call for a blanket ban on all mobile phones in cars.

The police cannot currently charge someone for using a mobile phone behind the wheel, instead they must prove a motorist is driving carelessly or dangerously or that they were not in a position to control the vehicle.

Simon Reeve

## PC who stole from pensioner jailed

A debt-ridden police officer, who betrayed the trust of an 80-year-old disabled pensioner he befriended while on duty and stole her £7,800 life savings, was jailed for 18 months yesterday.

PC Trevor Standing, 36, who wept as the judge handed him a "mean, opportunistic thief", stumbled on Kathleen Lyons' hoard of cash while trying to repair her television.

PC Standing, a father of three, described as "exemplary" after an 18-year career spanning both the Army and police force, hid most of the cash in the loft at his home, but used £500 to pay off bills. He also used the cash to buy a second-hand television for Mrs Lyons and pretended it was a gift from him.

Passing sentence Southwark Crown Court in south London, Judge Geoffrey Rivlin QC, told PC Standing, of Sundale Avenue, South Croydon, that he had committed a "grave breach of trust".

## Gyngell attacks TV takeover tycoons

Bruce Gyngell, the outspoken managing director of Yorkshire Tyne Tees Television launched a scathing attack on the "takeover tycoons" who are threatening the quality of British television.

Mr Gyngell, who was addressing the Cambridge Union last night, said: "In recent years we have attracted a new breed of businessmen who are only interested in television for the money they can make."

Instead of television being a cultural asset, there is a danger that it will be crushed by the bean-counters. Corporate accountants care nothing about quality."

Mr Gyngell, former head of TV-am, is fighting a rearguard action to prevent the takeover of YTV by Granada. Paul McCann

## Skier faces prosecution over death

Discipline on the slopes has long been a serious affair in North America's ski resorts. Nathan Hall, 18, a ski racer, is facing criminal prosecution in Colorado following a fatal collision with a British beginner in Vail on 20 April. The state is pondering charges either of manslaughter or negligent homicide.

Mr Hall struck Alan Cobb, 33, a cabinet-maker from Ipswich, who was skiing only for the fourth time. He died from a fractured skull. If Mr Hall is charged with manslaughter and convicted, he could face 16 years in jail. A speeding skier "is a weapon too", said District Attorney, Pete Michelson.

David Osborne

## Bordeaux heist leaves sour taste

A £500 reward was offered today for information into the theft of £30,000 worth of rare wines from a Bordeaux wine merchant.

Fifty cases of mainly red and white Bordeaux wines were taken out through a hole in the roof at Reid Wines in Marsh Lane, Hallatrow, north Somerset. Simon Wood, a partner in the company, said the wines were too young to be drunk. "What's most upsetting is that whoever took these wines probably won't like them and they'll just throw them away," he said. "Most of them need at least another 10 years to mature before drinking."

## people



Chelsea Clinton: Exam results placed her in the academic élite (Photograph: Reuters)

## She's leaving home: Chelsea chooses Californian college

Divulging what has become a veritable state secret, the White House announced yesterday that Chelsea Clinton, the 17-year-old only child of Bill and Hillary, will attend Stanford University in California to study medicine. Stanford is one of the US's premier – and most expensive – universities, with a particularly strong reputation for medical research.

Its location, in an idyllic setting at Palo Alto south of San Francisco, makes it also one of the furthest from Washington. Chelsea has apparently promised to introduce her parents to the virtues of computer e-mail before she departs.

Chelsea's choice had become a hot topic of gossip in recent weeks, with the First Daughter's every trip out of the capital scrutinised for signs of her educational intentions. Yale – her parents' alma mater – was seen as the "romantic" option; Harvard and the select Wellesley College were also shortlisted, with Princeton, 40 minutes outside New York, the strong favourite after she made a repeat visit there.

Both parents had insisted that the choice of college, and course, was entirely Chelsea's. She had reportedly been vacillating between medicine and history, but after accompanying her mother on a recent tour

of Africa, which included visits to many aid projects, she seems to have settled on medicine.

After arriving in Washington from Arkansas five years ago, Chelsea attended the élite Sidwell Friends' school, a Quaker foundation, in north-west Washington. Even without her highly placed parents, her high score in the university qualifying aptitude test, which placed her in the top 15,000 school-leavers in the US, would have given her the pick of the best colleges.

Academic excellence apart, Stanford is known for its astronomical fees (more than \$20,000 a year for tuition, with another \$7,000 for lodging). No wonder Clinton senior recently joked that he was thinking of approaching his former rival for the presidency, the millionaire Republican Bob Dole, for a loan.

Joking, indeed, seems to be the President's way of dealing with Chelsea's departure – which both parents have conceded will be a wrenching experience. "The bad news," Mr Clinton told a recent dinner, "is that our only child is leaving home; the good news is that it frees up another bedroom."

Washington was scandalised earlier in the year by reports that big Democratic Party donors had been rewarded with bed and breakfast at the White House. Mary Dejevsky, Washington

## Independent writer takes top prize in foodie Oscars

Simon Hopkinson (right), who writes on food for The Independent Magazine, has been awarded the title of Food Writer of the Year in the prestigious Glenfiddich Awards.

He was presented with his award before more than 500 guests at The Dorchester hotel in London on Tuesday night. Although Hopkinson is a chef who has come comparatively recently to food writing, he has already won a Glenfiddich book of the year award for Roast Chicken and Other Stories, along with his co-author, Lindsey Bareham, in 1995.

This year's book of the year was presented to Gordon Ramsay, a Michelin-starred chef, for his debut book, *Passion for Flavour*. BBC Education was awarded the Glenfiddich Trophy, for its *Techno: Food*, a series of programmes catering for the food technology module in the National Curriculum. The awards, the industry's premier accolades, recognise excellence in writing, publishing and broadcasting on food and drink matters.

Hopkinson – the founder and co-owner of the popular Bibendum restaurant in London, loved by foodies and celebrities alike – grew up in Bury, Lancashire, and was encouraged to enter the restaurant industry by his parents, both keen chefs. His first venture



was a small restaurant in Fishguard, Wales, which he eventually left to move on to London to work in such fashionable establishments as Hélène.

Renowned for his inventive style, Hopkinson is often described as one of the founding fathers of modern British cooking. He has been with The Independent Magazine for two years and is currently writing The Prawn Cocktail Years, a book which should reinvent and rehabilitate food clichés such as Black Forest gateau and coq au vin.

Each winner received a commemorative engraved quaich (a Scottish drinking cup), a cheque for £200 and a case of single malt scotch whisky. Readers wishing to sample some of Simon's fare should note: although he will not be writing in this Saturday's Independent, his column will return the following weekend. Simon Reeve

## Doncaster council chief suspended

Don Hale, the chief executive of Doncaster Council, has been suspended on full pay while an investigation into allegations of fraud by the District Auditor and police, continues.

The Labour-controlled council first came to prominence in January when the district auditor, Gordon Sutton, revealed that he was concerned about foreign trips and expensive "working lunches" taken by councillors and some officers.

The council's leader and deputy leader, Peter Welsh and Ray Stockhill, resigned in March, but this is the first time that any of the authority's officers have been affected by the inquiries.

Mr Hale has been chief executive of Doncaster for six years and was formerly married to Rita Hale, one of Britain's foremost experts on local government finance.

While the police investigation was initially focused on councillors' overspending, it has recently widened to look at land deals, the granting of planning permission to developers and the allocation of contracts by the council.

The council last night confirmed Mr Hale's suspension and said: "The scale of the inquiry has yet to be finalised, but we will look at all possible areas of the management of the council."

Alf Taylor, the director of education, has been appointed as acting chief executive.

Christian Wolmar

## Spain delighted by royal wedding plans

To the delight of a nation of *Hello!* readers (or *Hola!* as it is known here), Spain is to celebrate a royal wedding in October. Princess Cristina, 31, youngest daughter of King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia and third in line to the Spanish throne, yesterday became engaged to a Basque handball star, Iñaki Urdangarin, 28.

The announcement by the Zarzuela palace concludes weeks of feverish speculation that had filled gossip columns, since their relationship became public in March.

Princess Cristina, a keen sportswoman, met her fiance at the Olympic Games in Atlanta last August, when Urdangarin won a bronze medal as a member of the Spanish handball team.

The son of a prosperous Basque father and an aristocratic Belgian mother, Urdangarin lives in Barcelona and is a member of the reigning national champion handball team attached to mighty Fubol Club Barcelona.

Princess Cristina moved to Barcelona in 1992 for

six months, and stayed. She learned Catalan and worked as an exhibitions organiser for the cultural foundation of La Caixa savings bank. She has a political science degree from a Madrid university and a Masters from New York.

Cristina shares the easy, open manner of her elder sister, the Infanta Elena, whose marriage two years ago in Seville to the gangling sprig of one of Spain's most blue-blooded families captivated the country in a nationwide fiesta.

Urdangarin, tall, blue-eyed and handsome, is no mere upper-class beefcake. He plans to finish a business studies degree and retire from professional handball within three years.

Cristina's marriage will take place in Barcelona, and leaves only Prince Felipe, 29, heir to the throne, unmarried. Madrid is earmarked for his eventual wedding, but, despite being linked to a number of young women, his choice of bride remains unknown.

Elizabeth Nash, Madrid

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## briefing

## ASTRONOMY

## Search for life focuses on sun's twin in distant galaxy

A twin to the sun has been discovered that offers the best chance yet of finding extraterrestrial intelligence, astronomers reported yesterday. The star in the constellation of Scorpius, 46 light years from the Earth, is more like the sun than any other investigated before.

Although the sun is often dismissed as an average star, it is actually quite unusual. It is one of only 4 per cent of stars in our galaxy known as G-type main sequence stars. These are yellow stars that burn hydrogen into helium in their centres, and are considered the most obvious target for the search for extraterrestrial life.

Brazilian astronomers Gustavo Porto de Mello, of the Federal University, Rio de Janeiro, and Licia da Silva of the National Observatory, found that the star 18 Scorpii is a virtual carbon copy of the sun.

Using telescopes in Chile and Brazil, they found that the star's mass, temperature, colour, surface gravity and iron abundance closely match the sun's. The star emits 5 per cent more light than the sun and is slightly older.

The astronomers, whose findings will be published in next month's issue of *Astrophysical Journal Letters*, told *New Scientist* magazine: "We recommend that it be considered for strong priority in the ongoing planet searching programmes as well as in SETI (Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence) surveys."

## NATURE

## Whaling may have saved the seals

A fur seal population explosion in the Antarctic may have been aided by the whaling industry, British scientists said yesterday. Examination of seal hair found in lake sediments revealed that the colony was almost twice as big as it had been at any time in the past 6,600 years.

Researchers from the British Antarctic Survey in Cambridge said that between 1976 and 1994 the number of seals visiting the island each summer from breeding grounds in South Georgia had leaped from fewer than 100 to 20,500.

Writing in the science journal *Nature*, the researchers suggest that the Southern Ocean whaling industry, which has reduced the whale population by 90 per cent since 1922, may be partly responsible.

The whales feed on vast amounts of a shrimp known as krill, which are also food for seals. An abundance of krill caused by the diminished number of whales is thought to have helped promote seal population growth.

The seals, hunted to near extinction in the 19th and early present century, are now said to be causing extensive destruction of vegetation and soil erosion.



## SOCIETY

## Nail-filers need not apply

Secretaries are doing it for themselves. Nearly half now wield a degree of financial muscle within their companies. Forty-six per cent of secretaries, many of whom are now called anything from 'Office Manager' to 'Business Administrator', can authorise expenditure on their own, without having to ask for additional clearance elsewhere in the company, according to a survey of 248 secretaries by recruitment specialists Reed Employment Services.

Nearly 30 per cent of those surveyed could sanction spending up to £1,000 on their own authority, with 18 per cent having higher limits or an unlimited amount which they can sign off on any one project without having to clear their decisions by a manager.

Out of the total sample, 12 per cent can sign off between £1,000 and £10,000 on any one project, with 2 per cent able to sign off between £10,000 and £50,000, and 4 per cent either having no set limit or an unlimited budget in their own control.

Many secretaries are said to be fed-up with colleagues and employers who under-value the term 'secretary'. When asked what they would like to be called, they made suggestions such as Manager to the Managing Director, El Supremo, or even Chief Dogsbody. Simon Reeve

## WEATHER

## Few showers as drought goes on

April showers have been almost non-existent this year – with some places having less than a quarter of their usual rainfall. It looked like being a practically rain-free month until the last week, when a few drops fell.

Temperatures, on the other hand, were a little above the average – although warm days were frequently followed by frosty nights. The thermometer almost touched 22°C (72°F) at Bristol and Gatwick Airport on 9 and 10 April respectively, but fell to below 2°C (35°F) in Bournemouth on the night spanning those two dates.

The best of the sunshine was found in the South and East – but Northern Ireland and much of Scotland had a dull month.

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news

# Mike Leigh's secret is revealed



• This is the first time that anyone has had a Bafta award for anything of mine. I've only had two nominations before ... for that reason I've let my membership lapse

David Lister  
Arts News Editor

Mike Leigh, the film director given one of the industry's highest honours this week by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, revealed yesterday that he had resigned from the academy because of its failure to acknowledge his films for over 20 years.

In an exclusive interview with *The Independent*, the enigmatic and highly talented creator of quintessential British films also expressed for the first time his disappointment that his film *Secrets and Lies*, which won the Bafta best original screenplay and the Alexander Korda award for outstanding film of the year, had lost out so heavily at the Oscars to *The English Patient*.

But Leigh's real wrath was reserved for Bafta, the 50-year-old body which comprises all the great and the good in the British film and television industries, and awards the British

equivalent of the Oscars each year. Mike Leigh is unique in British film making. Working with equal success in movies, theatre and television, he has evolved a naturalistic and obsessively demanding relationship with specially selected troupes of actors evolving their characters and through them the scripts, and presenting an often depressing but equally often hilarious and poignant picture of contemporary Britain.

They range from the comic middle-class pretensions of suburbia in *Abigail's Party*, starring his estranged wife Alison Steadman, to his current triumph *Secrets and Lies*, the Oscar-nominated and Bafta-winning deeply affecting tale of a black girl who turns out to be white.

Despite his ever-growing fan base in Britain and abroad, the introverted Leigh has always considered himself an outsider to the industry, rightly resentful of the small number of cinemas his films often gain dis-

tribution to, and of the lack of establishment recognition of his work. A clue that, despite the acclaim for *Secrets and Lies*, he might still feel this exclusion came at last Monday night's Baftas. The most memorable image of the occasion was beaming superstar Diana Ross underneath a plume of purple hair presenting the top award to a solemn, unsmiling Leigh.

Speaking to the holder of the Bafta award for best British film yesterday, it became clear why even in his greatest moment of triumph he was feeling just a little curmudgeonly and wore a hangdog expression.

With thinly disguised contempt for the British academy, he complained that until he became a hot Hollywood property this year, Bafta had never nominated a single one of his full-length films or television works.

Leigh revealed that he had resigned from the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, which gave him three awards this week, because of what can only be described as his contempt for

the organisation. And he gave the first expression of his disappointment that *Secrets and Lies* had been so eclipsed by *The English Patient* at the Oscars.

Although Leigh would not criticise *The English Patient* himself, he did say that "many people in Hollywood" were surprised by the large number of prizes it had been given and the plaudits drawn by its own film, Bafta, by contrast, awarded *Secrets and Lies* prizes for best British film, best original screenplay and best actress for Brenda Blethyn who played the white mother.

But Leigh said yesterday: "This was the first time anybody has ever had a Bafta award for anything in any of my films or television pieces. I have only ever had two nominations before and even those were for special short films. I can say nothing more eloquent than those facts. I leave everyone to form their own opinions on that."

"For that reason I let my membership lapse. Who you get best di-

rector and best actor at Cannes [Leigh's film *Naked* won the Palme D'Or last year] and out even a nomination at Bafta, it was then I gave up. As somebody who has contributed fairly largely to the film industry, what that tells you about Bafta, well it doesn't need me to spell it out."

Even with three Bafta awards for his film, Leigh was loath to give the academy much credit for its good taste. "With the Oscar nominations, to have ignored *Secrets and Lies* would have been astonishing behaviour."

The lack of recognition for one of Britain's most successful, idiosyncratic and quintessentially British directors by the British film establishment does seem extraordinary. It is not only Bafta that has failed to recognise him. Earlier this year the Evening Standard Film Awards, decided by a jury of eminent film critics, ignored *Secrets and Lies* completely despite its Oscar nominations. The jury refused to consider him

for best screenplay as they claimed that his method of involving the cast with an evolutionary screenplay disqualifies him. Ironically, best screenplay was one of the awards he picked up at Bafta.

The Oscars, Leigh admitted yesterday, proved a crushing disappointment for him. Nominated for five categories, his film won none, while *The English Patient* scooped nine.

Leigh said: "I actually quite like *The English Patient* and I like Tooy Minghella [the director]. Of course, the famous night out at the Oscars when you have five nominations and walk away with nothing was not a nice night out for those of us involved with the film. It took our great sense of humour not to get pissed off."

"Many people in Hollywood said that *The English Patient* had got rather too much and we had got too little. But in the great scheme of things all the films that have taken awards are films that in the broad sense have intelligence and integrity."

## Holidays, PCs and DIY: savers rush to spend their share

Glenda Cooper  
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

Savers are spending again. Thousands of people are treating themselves by blowing building-society windfall handouts on holidays, computers and doing up the home.

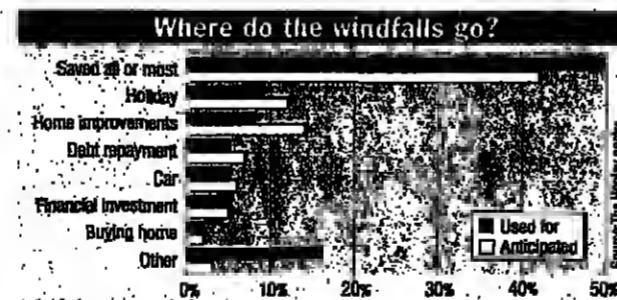
And the tourist industry has been quick to make their bid to benefit from the extra cash with two holiday firms launching their summer 1998 brochures tomorrow – before most people have even taken this year's break.

Nearly 15 million people are set to receive free shares from building societies changing into banks and which could be translated into cash payments aver-

aging £1,000. If everyone eligible sold all their shares this year, there would be an extra £20bn floating around the economy – equivalent to increased spending power of a 10p cut in the rate of income tax.

It is estimated that three in 10 people who received windfalls from the Alliance & Leicester windfalls, which has just floated on the stock market, have already sold their shares. The Halifax, the Woolwich and Northern Rock are all due to become banks as well over the next few months.

The upsurge in consumer confidence GFK put down to windfall cash as well as falling unemployment and tax cuts. "It doesn't look like people are going to spend large amounts of cash," said Dave Walker, associate director of GFK. "They



are more likely to buy washing machines or televisions or consumer durables. People are still a little bit nervous about their own situation and the general economic situation, particularly with the election."

Maevé Géraghty, associate

director of the financial-services practice at the Henley Centre, said: "What is interesting is that those who had received their windfalls, a lot had saved them but those who anticipated getting them, the percentage of those intending to

save had dropped. Holidays and home improvements have particularly done well ... the majority of people were anticipating treating themselves."

One in eight say they are going to spend their money on holidays, a fact both Airtours and First Choice were quick to take advantage of. Last year the companies set a record by launching the following year's brochures in July; this year it is two months earlier.

"We have found that there is extremely strong demand from those who want to take advantage of the very large savings on offer," said Philippa Harris, marketing director of First Choice. "The success of the early brochure launch is borne out

by the growth of bookings that First Choice has seen for summer '97 up 21 per cent year on year." A likely area of growth which had not been picked up on was home computers, added Ms Géraghty, as many of their prices fell into the windfall range.

But Jason Whittaker, of the magazine PC Advisor, warned against buying a computer because the moocay was burning a hole in their pocket. "If you're buying a computer to use up £1,000 that is the worst reason to buy," he said. "If you don't know what you are going to be using it for then you can end up spending far more on the software and the support."

Major charities had consid-

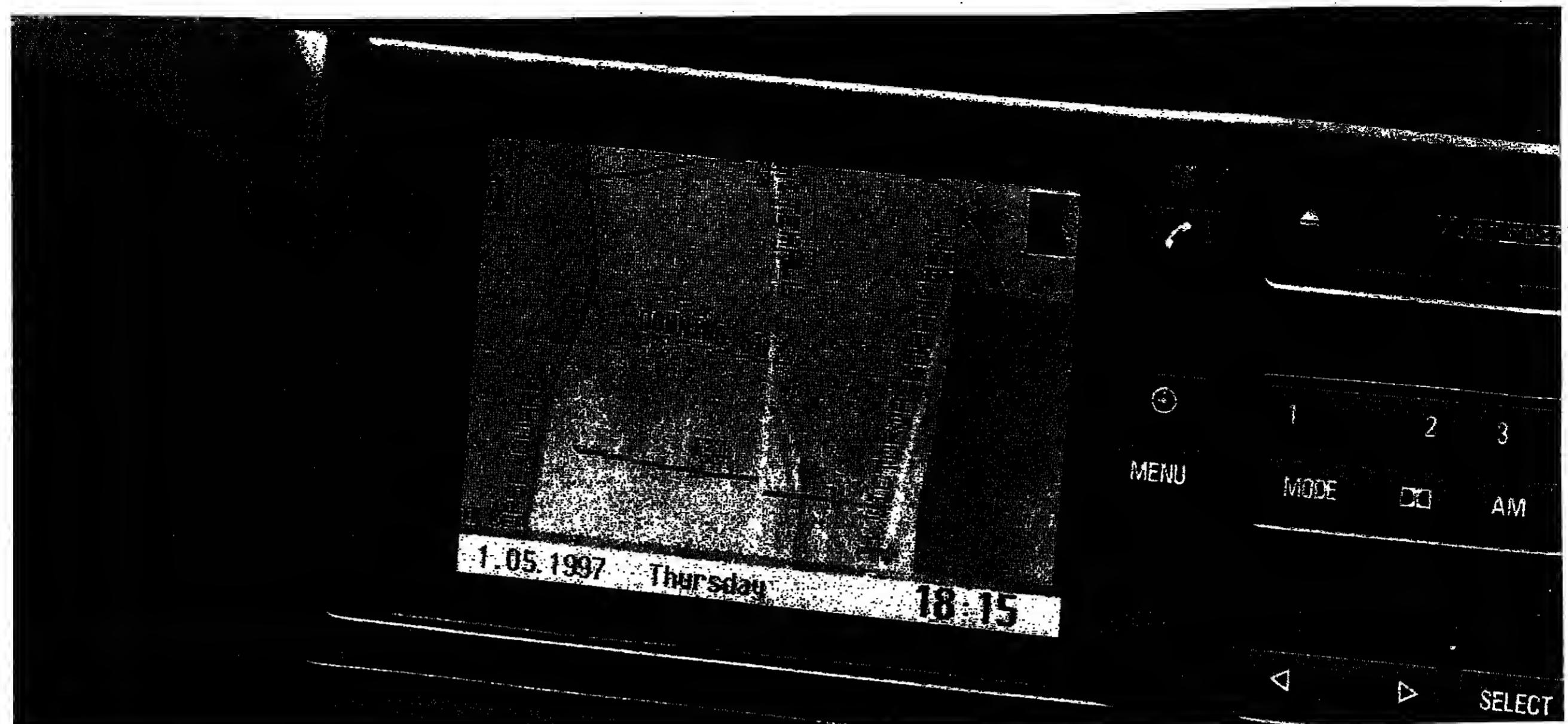
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## news

# Threats of violence as Maze talks stall

Warning from Loyalists in dispute over jail clampdown

**David McKittrick**  
Ireland Correspondent

The dispute at Northern Ireland's Maze prison rumbled ominously on yesterday, with representatives of loyalist inmates failing to reach agreement with the authorities.

Several dozen prisoners affiliated to the paramilitary Ulster Defence Association are protesting against a tightening of security by the authorities. Explicit threats have been made by the parent group against the authorities.

Prisoners set fire to observation posts at the prison, which is situated several miles outside Belfast, while some chambered on to the roof of some of the "H-blocks".

More talks are to be held to-



Turning up the heat: Loyalist prisoners burning a look-out tower at the Maze yesterday as the Ulster Democratic Party's Gary McMichael and John White speak to inmates



Photographs: Kelvin Boyes

day. The threat of violence is being taken seriously, since at least three prison officers have been shot dead by loyalists over the years, and many more have been injured in the prison. A number involved in the protest

are regarded as particularly militant, including some serving sentences for murder.

UDA prisoners were disciplined by the authorities after refusing to co-operate with new measures, which include twice-

daily lock-ups, more headcounts and more random searches.

The loyalists claim they are being penalised for the behaviour of the IRA, since the clampdown was instituted following

the discovery of an IRA tunnel out of the prison.

Yesterday talks took place at Stormont Castle between senior civil servants and members of the Ulster Democratic Party, headed by Gary McMichael.

The party's prison spokesman, John White, himself a former life prisoner at the Maze, said afterwards: "Unfortunately we were not able to resolve the situation. We put proposals on the table and we're having a meet-

ing tomorrow to continue our discussions. It means the demonstration will go on, unfortunately, but there is still the hope that tomorrow we may get some answers to some of the suggestions that we made."

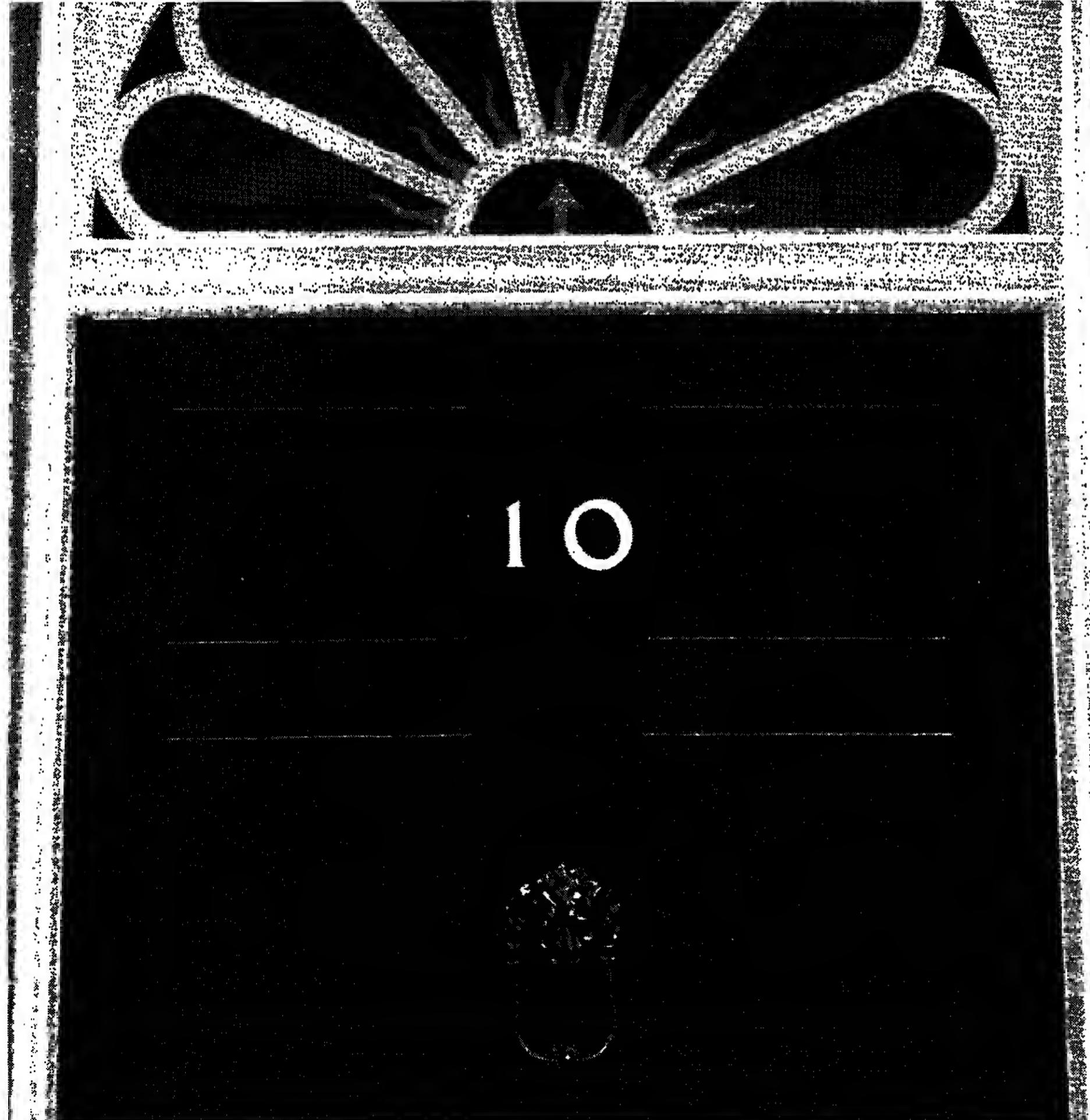
The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Sir Patrick Mayhew, said: "There is no excuse for loyalist factions issuing threats to staff and I condemn this action unreservedly. The new measures are not a punishment for anyone, they are quite simply the very minimum that the public can expect to ensure the safety of staff and prisoners."

Meanwhile, Finlay Spratt, chairman of the Prison Officers Association, called for the res-

ignation of the prison administration, describing it as incompetent. He added: "It's the job of the authorities to run the jail, and it's our job to apply the rules, but this crisis has been brought about by an incompetent management and they should resign."

The UDA, using its cover-name of Ulster Freedom Fighters, warned that if riot squads were sent in they would ensure the authorities would "pay a price". It added: "The ball is with the prison authorities. They know how to bring this matter to an end." Yesterday several hundred people, most of them relatives of the prisoners involved, staged a demonstration outside the prison.

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## Parents body attacked by charity bosses

**Lucy Ward**  
Education Correspondent

The management and financial controls of England's largest and wealthiest parents' organisation are expected to be called into question by charity watchdogs in a report due out tomorrow.

Charity commissioners investigating the running of the National Council of Parent Teacher Associations will raise concerns including the propriety of employment by the charity of its own former trustees.

The report will also examine the spending of charity funds on legal advice following the sacking last November of two pro-reform trustees. Further inquiries are expected to follow.

The NCPTA, which represents almost 12,000 schools and has a £750,000 annual income, has been rocked in recent months by a bitter internal dispute marking the culmination of years of in-fighting over its role and organisation.

Charity Commissioners launched an inquiry in February this year following complaints including allegations of junketing by members in expensive hotels. Concerns were also raised over alleged mismanagement, conflicts of interest and inadequate financial

controls within the charity. The claims have been strongly contested by NCPTA leaders. Spokeswoman Margaret Morrissey earlier this year insisted the organisation could "defend itself to the hilt".

Turmoil within the NCPTA came to a head late last year with the sacking of trustees Sandi Marshall and Sean Rogers, who was due to take over as chairman this month.

Both claim they were elected by the membership on a reformist platform to put the organisation on a more professional footing. They say they want to see more help for parents in schools at grass roots level, making better use of the charity's income and £1.2m savings.

They were removed by their fellow trustees for "bringing the organisation into disrepute" after a dispute with NCPTA staff.

A chief executive appointed last year to run the charity following pressure from reformers left after three months and has not been replaced.

The Charity Commissioners, whose interim report will be discussed by NCPTA members at an annual general meeting on Saturday, are expected to continue their investigations. Their ultimate sanction would be the removal of trustees.

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stall

# Untouched by modern times, these tribal people find the might of P&O at their door

P&O, one of Britain's biggest companies, is facing accusations from environmentalists that it is threatening the cultural survival of one of India's tribal peoples with plans for a massive port development on the sub-continent's west coast.

The Dahanu Warli tribe, who farm paddy fields in Maharashtra, remain unassimilated from the rest of India, keeping their own customs, religion and festivals. They live a simple life in huts made of wood, straw and cow dung. Unlike Hindus they eat beef, and unlike Muslims they eat pork.

Flower farms and tropical fruit orchards have given their homeland, Dahanu, a reputation as the "hives of Bombay", and led to it being designated an ecologically fragile zone.

It is here P&O proposes to build a 29-berth port, capable

If they get the go-ahead, the Warli way of life will be lost

of handling 250 million tonnes of cargo, about eight times as big as the port of Liverpool. The "mega-port" will include a passenger terminal and facilities for delivering oil, coal and cement.

P&O dropped its bombshell in February, when its Australian arm, P&O Ports, said a £700m project to build a massive port to the south of the region was being moved to a more natural harbour at Vadavan, inside the ecologically-sensitive zone. In spite of earlier official promises, the Maharashtra state officials enthusiastically welcomed the proposal.

P&O Ports said the £200m phase one of the project, to be undertaken by a proposed new company, Vadavan International Port, would involve the development of 2,700 metres of quayside, including a berth for bulk cargo, an oil berth and a passenger terminal.

**Blair caught taking down under clothes.**

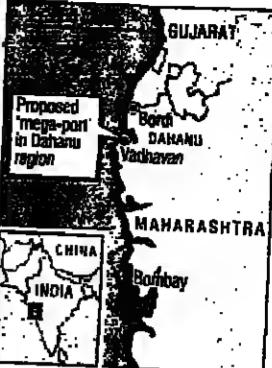
“ AS A WORKING MODEL FOR WHAT

*Robert Taylor says the ideas and aims which clothe New Labour come from the Antipodes, not America. And that should worry us all. Only in The Spectator, out today.*

INTENDS TO DO, LOOK NOT OVER THE ATLANTIC BUT TO DOWN UNDER.”

**THE SPECTATOR**

*Getting to the heart of the body politic and spilling some arterial blood.*



People in danger: Members of the Warli tribe from the Dahanu region of Maharashtra, India, whose unique way of life, unchanged for centuries, may not survive the building of a massive port in the heart of their region. Photograph: Images of India

Ancient culture of India's Warlis threatened by mega-port. Ian Burrell reports

Nergis Irani, of the Dahanu Taluka Environment Welfare Association, said: "If P&O get the go-ahead, it will bring about the industrialisation of the whole area and the Warli way of life will be lost." She claimed the proposal breached central government directives designed to protect Dahanu from developers.

P&O is preparing its feasibility report for the port project, which requires approval from the Indian ministry of environment and forests. The company has paid almost £100,000 as security for its bid.

An international network of environmental groups, including The Body Shop, Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace, have taken an interest in the project. More extreme groups have talked of protest actions against P&O commercial cruise and ferry operations.

Richard Boehle, of Body Shop, said: "P&O will have to be very careful how they proceed with this project, or the plight of the Warli people could become as damaging to them as the struggle of the Ogoni people in Nigeria has become to Shell."

P&O, whose chairman is Lord Sterling of Plaistow, operates in 16 companies across five continents. It owns, or part owns, 53 ports, from Manila in the Philippines to Maputo in Mozambique.

Although P&O has worked in environmentally sensitive areas, like the Great Barrier Reef, where it manages a tourist centre, the Dahanu issue is a potential public relations disaster. Management has declined to comment publicly on criticism of the scheme, but company sources have defended their environmental record around the world and stress that it is working with local government officials to minimise any damage caused by the project.

In P&O literature, Lord Sterling writes: "We have a responsibility both as individuals and in our business activities to take into account the environment."

mental impact of all that we do." Sources point out that the construction of the Vadavan port may create 1,000 jobs and the project would open the whole region up to economic development.

The British have built in Dahanu before. But they lived apart from the Warli villages, where a rich tribal culture had

evolved over many centuries. The Warlis developed their own form of painting on the insides of their huts, using a bamboo-stick as a brush and a paste made of tree gum, water and rice powder.

Dancing is central to Warli culture. Whole villages take part in a dance after the harvest to music from the sound of a

tarpa, an instrument made from a dried pumpkin.

The 175,000 Dahanu Warlis, whose dark skin distinguishes them from other Indians, have lived for most of this century alongside Zoroastrian farmers who migrated to Dahanu after facing religious persecution in what is now Iran.

The Zoroastrians built wells

and water pumps and helped to create fruit orchards.

Dahanu now has a yearly production of 50,000 tons of the chickoo tropical fruit, 70,000 tons of fish and 5 million coconuts. Every month it produces 8,500 railway wagons of vegetables. Campaigners claim there is zero unemployment and say an improved water

supply could ensure the Warlis' self-sufficiency.

The threat to Dahanu first emerged a decade ago when the World Bank funded a project to set up a power station in the area to supply the urban sprawl of Bombay, 80 miles to the south.

The plan ran into a storm of protests from environmental campaigners who claimed it would pollute the region's last remaining green area.

A succession of court battles helped bring about the Dahanu Notification of 1991, in which the Indian ministry of environment declared the area "ecologically fragile" and banned changes in the pattern of land use or the transfer of tribal holdings. Environmentalists thought they had finally saved the region when the government identified Bordi, a Dahanu village, as the country's first "eco-tourist destination".

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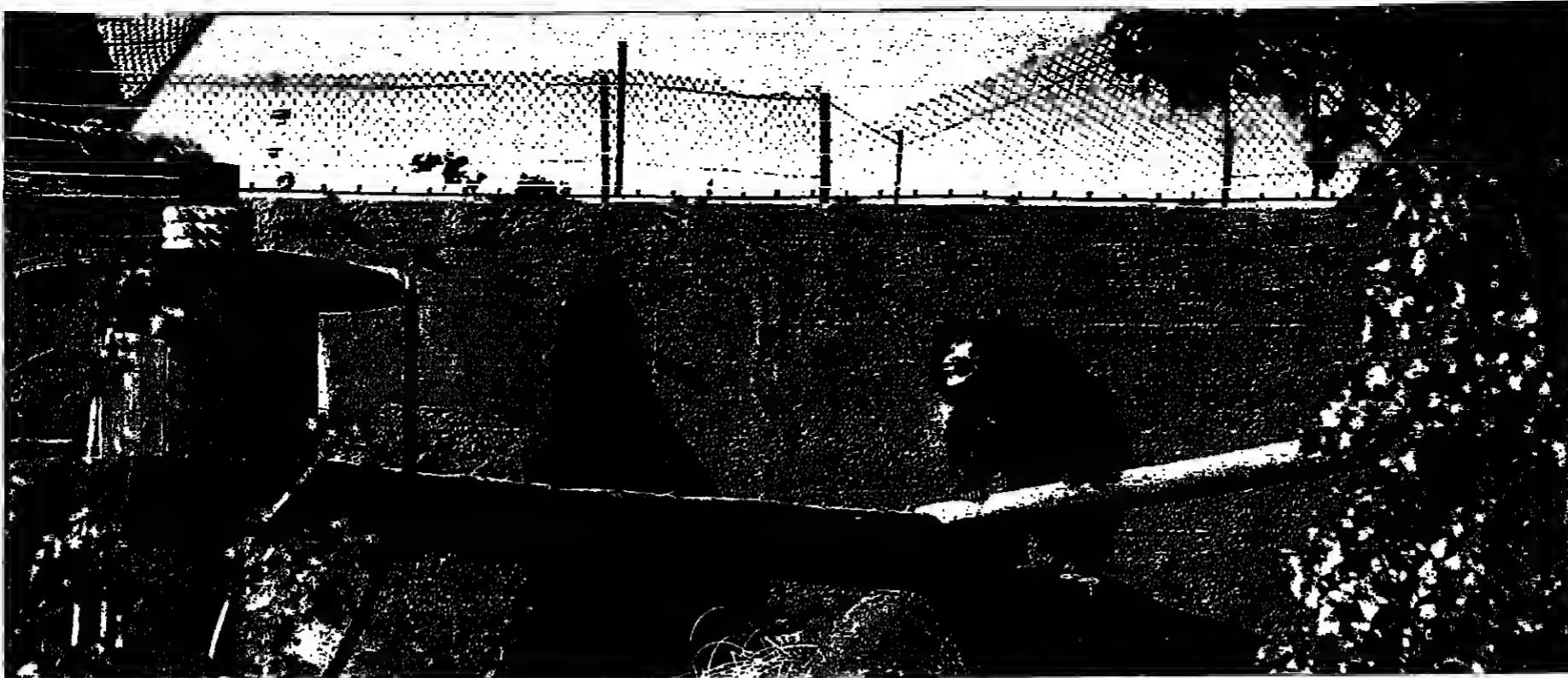
An urban sanctuary for bears or cynical showbiz?

Clare Garner

Animal welfare campaigners yesterday condemned London Zoo's reintroduction of bears to its newly refurbished Mappin Terrace, which opens to the public on Saturday.

Bears have not been seen at the zoo in Regent's Park since the Mappin Terrace was closed 12 years ago because the historic buildings were deemed unsafe and in need of major structural repairs.

At a cost of more than £160,000, the site has been transformed into Bear Mountain, a 2,300 square metre enclosure billed as "the world's largest urban zoo playground". Gone are the stark concrete slopes and bars which dated back to 1913. In their place are ropes, trees, undergrowth and "toys" for the bears' entertain-



Bear necessities: London Zoo's new stars, a pair of Sloth bears, exploring London Zoo's newly refurbished Mappin Terrace yesterday

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

ment. Furthermore, London Zoo has introduced other species into the bears' enclosure in order to simulate natural conditions. They include muntjac deer, peacocks and a colony of leaf-eating monkeys. But the critics are not satisfied.

Jonathan Pearce, campaigns di-

rector for the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), described as "cynical" the zoo's importation of two Sri Lankan Sloth bears from Warsaw Zoo in Poland. Their real intention, he said, was not conservation, but to attract crowds. "They claim they are going to breed

them, but really it's just a drive to get a cute attraction," he said.

Dr Roger Mugford, an animal psychologist, insisted that however good the conditions, bears would always suffer in captivity. Dismissing the zoo's argument, he said: "London Zoo is totally about showbiz."

Had London Zoo really wanted to help with conservation, it should have turned Mappin Terrace into a bear sanctuary, according to Mr Pearce.

The 12-year-old jet black Sloth bears, a male and a female - the only ones in the UK - which now live at Bear Mountain are expected to be "a

big hit among visitors". "Bears are incredibly popular with visitors and we are thrilled that they are now back at Regent's Park," said Dr Jo Gipps, director of London Zoo.

Doug Richardson, assistant curator of mammals at the zoo, said the enclosure was built to give the ani-

mals the chance to develop their mental faculties.

"Food is placed strategically at the top of a log or platform to encourage the bears to climb on to it. They have obstacles and they adore plastic toys, including a traffic cone," he said.

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## No takers for third of training awards

Lucy Ward  
Education Correspondent

Over a third of the Government's flagship job training qualifications have never been completed by a single trainee, according to figures from the quango set up to promote them.

A further 50 out of the 878 existing National Vocational Qualifications have been completed by just one person.

Among the nation's least popular NVQs are level two qualifications in pest control, maintaining fire-extinguishing equipment, spectator control and funeral service, none of which has yet been awarded. Certificates in amusements, cartoon manufacture and steel hot rolling have also yet to be gained.

The revelation that a total of 380 individual NVQs have been achieved by one person at the most casts doubt on government attempts to promote the qualifications as central to Britain's skills revolution.

A spokeswoman said there was a time lag between qualifications being accredited and the first person gaining a certificate while assessors were trained and other systems put in place.

Another factor was the high number of people opting to study only for sub-units of NVQs related to their particular occupation, rather than for the full qualification.

NVQs admitted it was concerned at the low take-up where a qualification had been available for some time. The spokeswoman said: "We will consider carefully whether these NVQs should stay in the system when they come to be re-accredited and we will tighten our criteria for deciding whether there is a market for new ones."

NVQs make up a fraction of the 16,000 vocational qualifications available. As a result of criticism, the Government has ordered a big reduction in the list of qualifications eligible for public funding.

### DAILY POEM

#### A Good Read

By Tony Harrison

That summer it was Ibsen, Marx and Gide.

I got one of his you-stuck-up-bugger looks:

ah sometimes think you read too many books.

ah niver 'ad much time for a good read.

Good read! I bet! Your programme at United!

The labels on your whisky or your beer!

You'd never get unbearably excited

poring over Kafka or King Lear.

The only score you'd bother with's your darts,

or fucking football ...

(All this in my mind.)

I've come round to your position on 'the Arts'

but put it down in poems, that's the bind.

These poems about you, dad, should make good reads for the bus you took from Beeston into town for people with no time like you in Leeds -

once I'm writing I can't put you down!

This poem, from the sequence read this week on Radio 3 by Tony Harrison to mark his 60th birthday, can be heard tonight at 10.30. All the works chosen come from his *Selected Poems* (Penguin, £6.99) © Tony Harrison

Zoo's listed buildings

chance to develop their cultures. Is placed strategically a log or platform to enable bears to climb on to have obstacles and they do this, including a log the said.

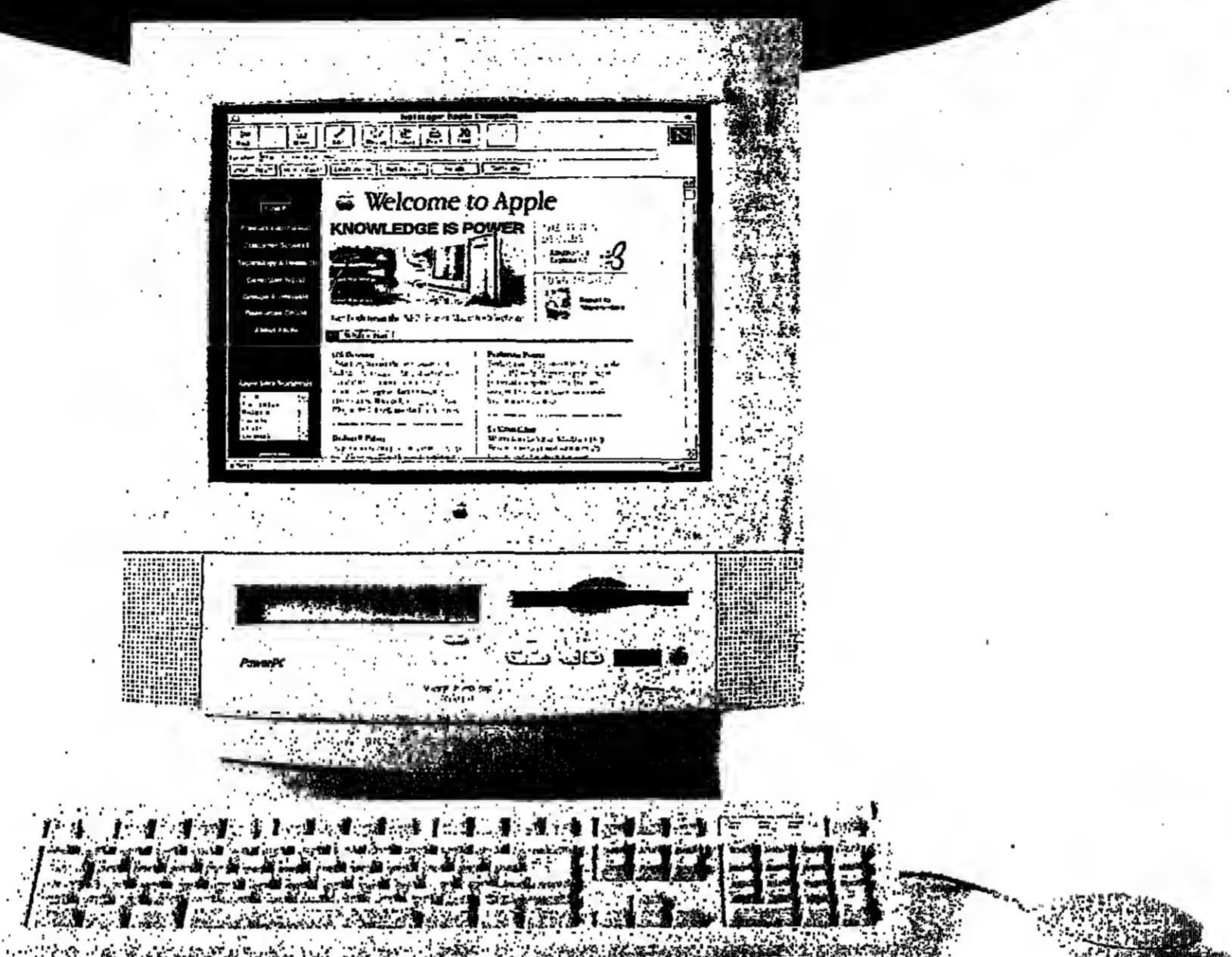
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The short answer, not very. And the long answer? Not very, read on.

An easy way to get started is to visit the Yell® website. You'll find it at <http://www.yell.co.uk>.

**WARNING:** this is a highly technical treatise on the internet. Before reading it, you should be able to understand complicated terms such as "Yellow Pages", "plumber", "Polish" and "hotel". It is designed to be read by the average 59-year old human being. If there isn't one handy, rush out now and grab one before you go any further. You have been warned.



On Yell, you'll find Electronic Yellow Pages® (the on-line version of, you guessed it, Yellow Pages®), a film guide, a city guide and one or two other things, all arranged in a way that makes them easy to use.

EYP® (as we like to call Electronic Yellow Pages) is the comprehensive on-line source of information about businesses in the country. It includes the names, addresses, telephone numbers (and of course business type) of over 1.6 million companies.

Which is obviously rather a lot to look through when you need a horse breeder in a hurry. So something called a search engine does everything for you.

Should you be looking, it can also find you eight plumbers around Leek, two demolition experts in Wrexham and for "Boring" it will tell you to look under Civil Engineers.

With some businesses, you can click on the company's name and a hyperlink (a technical term for, well, a link) will transfer you out of Yell and take you to their home page. (To be any easier, we'd have to come and do it for you.)

Here you may find photographs of their staff and products, a map showing you where to find them and an address so you can send them an e-mail. (Don't worry if you're still using something as quaint as a telephone, the number is also listed.)

But there's much more than just good old Yellow Pages on good new Yell.



## Yell, the website of yellow pages. Search engines, hyperlinks, web directories and for people over the age of seven, a button marked "help".

The film guide has news, reviews and a search facility. For example, if you want to find out about 1930's Polish cinema, you're probably a film geek. The good news is you don't have to be an internet geek as well.

Yell's Film Finder has a directory of World Cinema sites and one of those search engines to help find the film you're looking for.

And "What's On Stage" will let you do the same for the theatre, darling.

The Guides section has London's newest exhibitions, the best restaurants and reviews of whichever bar is 'in' at the moment (it's updated every month). Luckily, there's also a hotel guide in case you miss your last train home.

Of course, there's still one thing we haven't mentioned. But now that you've used the search engines, checked out the web directories and jumped down hyperlinks, what in the World Wide Web could you possibly want with a little button marked "HELP"?



On-line shopping. It's just like the real thing, except you can't squeeze the vegetables.



Electronic Yellow Pages has 164 horse breeders and dealers.



The website of Yellow Pages. <http://www.yell.co.uk>



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# election '97

## '24 hours to change the country'

There was a time when the siting of a Labour leader's election speech next to a Titanic memorial might have seemed a tad injudicious. Yesterday, however, as Tony Blair's campaign hurtled to its conclusion in Scotland and the North East, all such omens seemed only to conjure up thoughts of John Major and his beleaguered cabinet.

The memorial, a modest affair, bore the names of two Dumfries townsmen who went down with the ship when she sank in April 1912, and was situated in the town's Dock Park amid hundreds of cheering Labour supporters.

### PM fails to get the yolk as Labour turn rowdy

**Colin Brown** sees the first – and last – egg of the campaign thrown

John Major was mobbed in the final hours of the campaign yesterday by supporters of Barbara Follett, the Labour style guru. The scuffles were the last thing Tory image-makers would have wanted on the evening news before polling day.

Mr Major seized the opportunity to have a final go at the Labour campaign managers, whom he had accused of carrying out a "great marketing scam" on the electorate. "This is old Labour. If they had known our schedule they would have done it every day, everywhere. These are Labour activists. They don't agree with Labour policy. This is real Labour. It is very good people can see it. I just wish they had seen it a little bit earlier. This isn't the sweet smiling faces of Labour ... This is the real Labour Party."

An aide said Mr Major described it as the "hastiest" behaviour encountered in the campaign. "It was not just ... heckling. There were some ... pushing and it was very aggressive. We have some aggressive heckling at times from the Socialist Workers Party and the Referendum Party but this is the worst behaviour and it came from people holding up authorised New Labour posters."

Mr Major was never in real danger, surrounded by detectives and camera crews, but an egg was thrown - the first of the campaign. It landed on the Prime Minister's bomb-proof Daimler, into which "Norma Major" had been taken by her detective.

Some Labour supporters boozed and chanted "one more day". A few jostled Conservative supporters, who held up protective placards and a ragged blue banner. Ken Follett, the author and husband of the Labour candidate, watched from the safety of the pavement as the mêlée took place around the trolleys of a supermarket.

Mr Follett, carrying sandwich boards with his wife's photograph, said: "I think he is just

going through the motions. Our canvassing figures are so good we don't believe them. He looked bemused by Mr Major's old-style campaigning techniques. "I wonder what the point is. The Tories are terribly angry. Have you noticed they say nasty things and they are popping our balloons with cigarettes?"

Mrs Follett was a few hundred yards away in the town centre, where Labour supporters, tipped off about Mr Major's visit, had been planning a hoisterous welcome. Her husband said: "It would not have been very dignified for her to be here." Sheila Gunn, the Prime Minister's press secretary, said: "The Prime Minister doesn't believe there are any no-go areas in the entire UK. He expects the right to be heard in a democracy to put his point over, even with people who disagree with him. These people didn't want to hear his arguments. It shows the Prime Minister is prepared to go anywhere to take his message to the country, whatever the behaviour of Labour's supporters."

Earlier, the campaign appeared to be drifting towards a quiet ending as Mr Major decided to highlight his commitment to sport.

After travelling more than 10,000 miles to attack Labour, his visit to an exhibition next door to Wembley Stadium to see the FA Cup seemed an extraordinarily low-key way to end the campaign. Mrs Major, who has done her best to look interested, no matter how dull the photo-opportunities in various places across the country, found it hard sustaining her smile to the very end.

The Major posed with the FA Cup and photographers shouted: "Put it on your head Mr Major." But he resisted the temptation. At that moment, the words of David Coleman came to mind: "They think it's all over ... Stevenage showed that Mr Major will go on kicking until the final whistle at 10pm tonight."

The Major posed with the FA Cup and photographers shouted: "Put it on your head Mr Major." But he resisted the temptation. At that moment, the words of David Coleman came to mind: "They think it's all over ... Stevenage showed that Mr Major will go on kicking until the final whistle at 10pm tonight."



Last gasp: John Major (above) besieged by Labour supporters in Stevenage; Tony Blair and John Prescott in Christchurch. Photographs: Tom Pilston/David Rose/John Voss



### THE HURRIED VOTER'S GUIDE

#### THE CAMPAIGN

#### KEY ARGUMENTS

#### GOOD DAY

#### BAD DAY

#### HDGWASH

#### THE OTHER PARTIES

Alex Salmond, leader of the SNP, sent his party workers out to the constituencies, calling them "bravehearts" and predicting a "barrel-load" of seats. Addressing activists in Edinburgh, he said: "We must decide if we wish to speak as a powerless parish council, or ... a sovereign parliament."

The Monster Raving Loony Party held their election victory party last night - several hours before polling began. Lord Sutch said it was a tradition to hold the party before the election. "We often find other parties send their workers to our parties - especially as most of them won't have anything to celebrate after the election."

#### MEDIA STAR



Conservative Margaret Thatcher was not invited to a breakfast this morning. Sunday Mirror editor Tim Jones, who is a Labour voter, and their MP, Sir Alan Budd, were holding the do. She phoned BBC Radio 4's Election Call yesterday to berate John Major for the failure to put across the Conservative message during the campaign. "We are going to lose tomorrow, John, because we have not got the message across. We have not worked up the time to the last those great goals we have moved ... and that ultimately has to rest at your door."

#### ONE TO REMEMBER

Tony Blair told *The Independent* at yesterday's morning press conference: "The promises that we have made are specific, they are limited, as I often point out, they are limited, but they are specific, and if we deliver on those, then I think we're entitled to trust. 'If we don't deliver on those, then we'll not be'."

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range

ring.

day

# Labour lead stays rock-solid to the end

John Rentoul

Tony Blair is set to become prime minister tomorrow, with Labour still 17 points ahead in the final *Independent/Harris* poll. But the pollsters remain jittery about predicting the precise margin of victory.

Tom Simpson, managing director of Harris Research, has estimated what might happen if people behave the way they did at the last election, and suggests Labour's lead in the real vote today could be cut to 11 points.

Although all the polls, apart from MORI, adjust the don't knows and won't says to take account of Conservative supporters who are reluctant to declare themselves, Mr Simpson said: "We can't be sure we've got all of them this way, so we've made a stronger adjustment on the basis of what happened last time."

He assumes a late swing on the same scale as in 1992. Applying this adjustment to today's poll cuts Mr Blair's majority of 173-179 seats to around 99.

But the evidence from the poll itself suggests that Labour's

## THE INDEPENDENT HARRIS POLL

Which party do you trust most to take the right decisions about...? (1992 NOP/BBC exit poll in brackets)

	The economy	Income tax	Prices and inflation
Labour	49 (35)	45 (32)	46 (33)
Conservative	34 (51)	35 (53)	39 (53)
Lib Dem.	10 (14)	15 (15)	10 (14)

vote is solid. While 81 per cent of Labour supporters said they had "definitely decided" how to vote, only 68 per cent of Tory voters were sure.

Of Tories, 23 per cent said: "I may change my mind", against 33 per cent of Liberal Democrats and only 13 per cent of Labour supporters. The second preferences of Tory wavemates tilt towards the Liberal Democrats, while those of Liberal Democrats split nearly three-to-one in Labour's favour.

We asked which party voters trusted most to take the right decisions in five areas and found Labour ahead in each one.

Harris also asked: "What is the one most important reason for supporting the party you intend to vote for?"

This is comparable to a question Harris asked in its exit poll for ITN in 1992, and the answers are very similar. "The party's policies" were named by 45 per cent (47 per cent in 1992); "I usually vote for that party", 20 per cent (20); "Dislike of another party", 15 per cent (15); "The party leader", 7 per cent (7); "The local candidate" 4 per cent (5).

Finally, Harris asked what people thought of the "new" Labour Party. Half the sample, 49 per cent, said the changes show Tony Blair "is a strong leader with a clear sense of direction". Of Conservative voters, 23 per cent also thought that Mr Blair was a strong leader.

*Harris Research interviewed 1,154 adults face-to-face in their homes on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday this week. The figures exclude 14 per cent who didn't know, wouldn't say or wouldn't vote, who could not be allocated to a party on the basis of how they voted in 1992.*



Star of 45: If polls are right Tony Blair will match Clement Attlee's rout of the Tories

Photograph: Hulton Getty

## Poll leads raise spectre of the rout of 1945

John Rentoul

Only twice this century have the Conservatives been routed on a scale suggested by today's opinion polls.

In 1945, the Tories were reduced to just 213 MPs. Labour, led by Clement Attlee, won 393 seats and a majority of 146. But six years later, the Labour Government was out of power.

In 1906, the Tories were cut to 157, with the Liberals under Henry Campbell-Bannerman winning by a margin of 130 seats. The Tories were out of power until the wartime coalition of 1915.

What is intriguing is that both the 1906 and 1945 anti-Tory landslides marked new beginnings in the country's political history. The 1906 Liberal Government levied progressive taxation to pay for the start of the welfare state, including the introduction of the old age pension.

The 1945 Labour Government built the "cradle to grave" welfare state (a blueprint by the Liberal Sir William Beveridge), including the National Health Service.

Tory landslides, on the other hand, have tended to be endorsements of what went before. The Tories won the 1979 election, which marked the beginning of the Thatcher revolution, by a majority of 45 seats, and only went on to win landslides later.

## REPAIR MANUAL

M Registration Cars



TOYOTA COROLLA

1st

## REPAIR MANUAL

M Registration Cars



VW GOLF

48th

Once again the BBC Top Gear/  
JD Power survey speaks volumes.

No prizes for guessing

which car came top in the BBC Top Gear/JD Power and Associates 1997 UK Customer Satisfaction Study. Drivers of all the leading makes were asked questions covering vehicle performance, number of problems experienced and customer care. And, for the fourth year running, the world-beating Toyota Corolla was rated the UK's single most satisfying car by the most important judges of all – the car owners. And the runner up was the stunning Toyota Celica. To quote from the report "Vehicle quality is the outstanding strength – Toyota owners report fewer problems on average than owners of any other make." No surprise, then, that they voted both the car in front and the one behind it a Toyota.

## REPAIR MANUAL

M Registration Cars

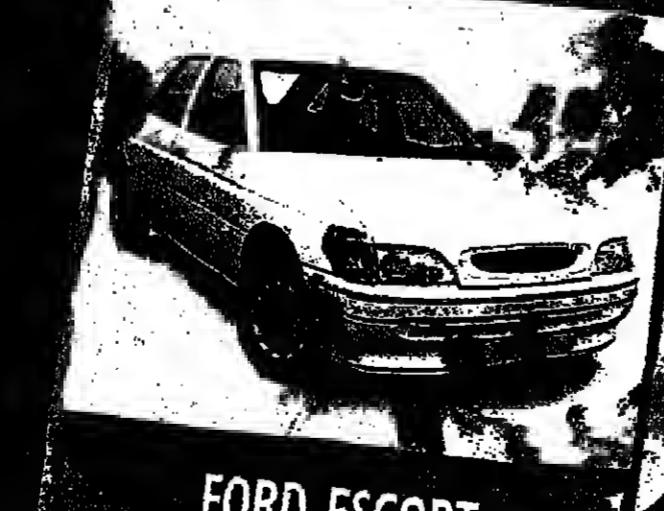


VAUXHALL ASTRA

79th

## REPAIR MANUAL

M Registration Cars



FORD ESCORT

84th

THE CAR IN FRONT IS A TOYOTA... AGAIN

STUDY BASED ON A TOTAL OF 16,998 CAR CONSUMER RESPONSES. RANKINGS TAKEN FROM TOP GEAR MODEL SCORES AS FEATURED IN MAY EDITION OF BBC TOP GEAR MAGAZINE. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE TOYOTA RANGE CALL 0800 777 555.



Paul Sykes: Issued libel writ

to the Commons Standards and Privileges Committee to decide whether they contravened rules issued 18 months ago by Parliament following the cash-for-questions affair.

Labour was officially playing down the story because it did not want Europe to become an issue on the day of polling. However, individual MPs or members of the public will be able to table a complaint after the election to Sir Gordon.

It is not certain whether the donations breached the rules, which say members should not take payments for speaking in the House on a particular issue, nor can MPs enter into any "contractual arrangement which fetters the Member's complete independence in Parliament by any undertaking to press some particular point of view on behalf of an outside interest." Mr Sykes argues that these MPs already held anti-single currency views before and that they did not benefit personally from the donation.

Christian Wolmar  
Westminster Correspondent

Paul Sykes, the millionaire businessman who has given £500,000 to local Conservative parties whose candidates oppose the single currency, has rebuffed suggestions that his donations would jeopardise their parliamentary future.

Mr Sykes, who is firmly opposed to the single currency and federalism, has exacerbated divisions within the Tory party by giving between £1,000 and £3,000 to areas with a sitting Tory MP. The money has been taken up by 237 associations, costing Mr Sykes about £500,000, but he argues that suggestions that he gave the money to candidates are wrong.

He said yesterday: "The money was given to constituency associations and not candidates, and we checked the situation very carefully before making the donations."

Mr Sykes yesterday issued a writ against the *Guardian* for libel after it ran a story saying: "This man gave money to 237 Tories. They may well regret it."

Mr Sykes is demanding a retraction and an apology and warned that he was prepared to pursue it all the way. "I hope they give in, because I don't want to cause any job losses at the paper," he said. He also demanded the resignation of the editor, Alan Rusbridger.

It is unclear whether Sir Gordon Downey, the Commission for Parliamentary Standards, is likely to receive a complaint about the donations when Parliament resumes. If so, he may be asked to produce a report for

# Labour's power handover

Christian Wolmar  
Westminster Correspondent

The transfer of power after a British general election is painfully public for the loser.

Assuming the polls are right, and after John Major concedes, which would be in the middle of the night, the first official move will be made by the Prime Minister's private secretary, Alex Allan, who will ring up his counterpart at the Palace to make an appointment for Mr Major to tender his resignation.

The meeting will probably take place in late morning, and Mr Allan will stay for a cup of tea to await the arrival of Mr Blair. Mr Major, who arrived in his official car, will leave in the back-up vehicle, probably to spend the weekend in Huntingdon. Meanwhile, Mr Blair will arrive in his leader of the opposition's car, see the Queen, no kissing of hands, according to official sources - and

Civil servants are already preparing for new masters

## New administration plunges in to hectic schedule

Following the six-week election campaign, the really hard work begins - once the Prime Minister has formed and announced his administration. The diary then begins to look hectic: Monday 5 May: Start of two-day meeting of the European Union's inter-governmental conference, in Strasbourg, on preparation for Amsterdam summit in June. Wednesday 7 May: Formal re-election of Commons Speaker - Betty Boothroyd. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, 7-8 May: Swearing in of new MPs. After early rush, a steady flow of MPs will swear (or affirm) an oath of allegiance to the Queen until the Commons is adjourned for the State Opening.

Thursday 8 May: The first Cabinet meeting, to agree contents of Queen's Speech legislative programme for the year.

Monday 12 May: Chancellor of the Exchequer attends Euro council in Brussels on European Monetary Union. Wednesday 14 May: The official State Opening of Parliament, with Queen's Speech.

leave as almost the prime minister. The official announcement does not come until a meeting of the Privy Council, probably held on Saturday evening, at which the new Cabinet will be given their seals of office.

The flat upstairs at No 10 is furnished and the Majors will have put their chattels into store, leaving it in "the sort of

Mr Blair's first task will be to appoint the Cabinet and the first

condition you would expect to find a holiday flat" - except that there will be no holiday. This should not be too much of an immediate problem because the Blairs will continue living in Islington for the next few weeks, before moving into the four-bedroomed flat "above the shop".

The civil servants view a successful transfer of power as the biggest challenge of their ca-

reers. There have already been extensive preparations with shadow ministers being allowed to see permanent secretaries since January last year with Mr Major's blessing. Neil Kinnock apparently found these meetings so valuable that he wanted to ensure that Mr Blair was able to take advantage of them. Mr Kinnock wrote to Mr Major after his defeat to ask if shadow ministers could have early access to ensure that they would not miss out should there have been a snap poll.

All departments have produced large briefs for new ministers and civil servants have also made plans for the new Department of International Development promised in the Labour manifesto. The Department of Education has also bought equipment and prepared a team of readers, as David Blunkett, who is blind, has been promised the job

of Permanent Secretary.



by Anonymous

**W**hile most of Britain slept or made love - their quotidian dreams and sights floating up to heaven - our characters were keeping the watches of the night. Nipper - exhausted - had listened to the midnight bulletin, set his paper to "vibrate" and put it under his pillow. Apart from a vague, unlocated randomness, he was now hardly a corporeal being at all. Each step of his shining career had been accompanied by such a moment of pure intellectual calm. From school to university, from university to leader's office - and now - from leader's office to Number 10. He turned twice on his futon, and was asleep.

Queco Mum lay half awake in the hotel room, her sub-conscious tyrannised - like the mother of a boy to be pampered the next day - with arrangements. Timetables, microphones, stewards, pyramids, secret service

standard lamp - jotted down yet more notes (to add to the tomes he had already written) for his first Budget speech. It would be a belter. Aunty, in the room next to Queen Mum's, climbed into her nighty, cleared her teeth, plumped up her pillow and - after a brief reflection that she had done all she could, and that it all

had been a dreamless sleep.

Bobby's sleep, however, was far from dreamless. His night mind was peopled by feather-hatted governors-general and sashed ambassadors, furnished with spacious offices and beautiful paintings. History books fell open to reveal his photograph and to tell of great administrations and reforms.

Mrs Candidate called the nanny at 11pm, to make sure that all was well at home. The kids were fast asleep, and she had pictured them as they must have been, breathing gently - their eyelids trembling as they sailed

the high seas with pirates or got into trouble with surreal headmasters.

To her tired irritation her last waking thoughts had strayed again to curtains and carpets. Then she was asleep.

As dawn rose in the small village, and the first light leaked into the room, she laid an arm over her husband's side of the bed - where it flopped onto the empty sheet.

The Candidate looked out onto the dewy lawn,

over whose wet length a few wisps of mist were drifting. By the light he judged that it was shortly after 4am, the first birds began calling from the trees at the end of the garden. He had woken half an hour earlier, not with a start, but simply as though it was now time - early as it was - for his day to begin. Taking care not to wake his wife, he had slipped downstairs in his blue pyjamas, poured himself a glass of Badoit from the fridge, and come to stand at this window to watch this day begin.

He was not, he knew, a particularly humble man. People had usually thought well of him, and he had always supposed that they must have a point. But today really was his date with destiny. From leading a party - a tricky thing to be sure - he would be going to running a nation. So he stood there by the window, as the sun rose, and prayed. Not for victory, but for wisdom.



Guardian of democracy: Peggy Saich, a local government employee who is acting as a presiding officer in Saffron Walden, Essex, stands over the ballot box that she - like many others in rural constituencies - will look after overnight in her home

Photograph: Brian Harris

## Astrologers chart cosmic encouragement for Blair

Kim Sengupta

John Major may as well stay in bed today. It's not just the pollsters who are predicting a disaster, he also faces a cosmic meltdown. The Prime Minister could not have chosen a

worse time to call the election, according to the astrologers. He has played right into Tony Blair's Venus ascendant. Unless the stars are wrong, it will be a Labour government leading Britain into the new millennium. Paddy Ashdown cannot expect

much immediate change from today. But for him things can only get better. He may yet find himself part of a Lib-Lab coalition, because although the stars are favouring Mr Blair at the moment, he may have problems with his backbenchers in the future.



John Major  
(Aries.  
Born 29  
March  
1943)



Tony Blair  
(Taurus.  
Born 6  
May 1953)



Paddy  
Ashdown  
(Pisces.  
Born 27  
February)

"It is quite obvious that the Prime Minister did not take astrological advice when setting the election date," said an astrologer Jonathan Cainer, who writes a horoscope column for the *Daily Mail* and magazines such as *Woman and Prima*. "If he had he would have known that this was precisely the wrong time to call it. Tony Blair must feel it is a gift from heaven which has landed in his lap."

Both Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan took astrological help when making important decisions, and the longevity of their political lives show this was hardly a foolish thing to do.

1 May is in Mr Blair's sign of the zodiac, Taurus, and the Sun is also there at the moment. Mr Cainer says Mr Major should have gone to the polls towards the end of last year, when the stars were much more benign for him.

The stars are "homing bright on the Labour leader at the moment. Venus, the ruler of Taurus, is in his star sign, and so is Mercury, the planet of communications and commerce. And Rupert Murdoch's Sun is also the only one backing Mr Blair, the planet by the same name is also in Taurus."

Jonathan Cainer said: "This is undoubtedly a very auspicious time for Mr Blair. Mr Major has given him the advantage by the timing of the election. But the Labour leader has a particularly good planetary situation as well."

But there could be trouble ahead. Mr Cainer said that for Taurians "Jupiter's sharp link to Venus is a classic cosmic warning. You are in danger of getting too much of a good thing. You may soon have to pay a high price for a source of pleasure".

Backbenchers could get Mr Ashdown the Cabinet post he covets. There are also strong planetary connections between the charts of the two men - the Sun and the Moon when Mr Blair was born, to the Leo ascendant in Mr Ashdown's Pisces.

Nicholas Campion said: "Obviously the chances of the Lib Dems winning the election are about as great as Elvis Presley landing a flying saucer on top of the Loch Ness monster. But he could end up with a job in government. There are strong planetary links between the two men. They need not even be a hung Parliament for Ashdown to get involved. The two men should work well together."

Jonathan Cainer said: "Over the next few months [Ashdown] will find himself going through a period of renewal which proves immensely beneficial."

## Candidates lost among the junk mail

Nicholas Schoon

In one of the safest Tory wards, in a safe Tory constituency, the election simply has not registered. Not a sign of a canvasser, let alone a candidate, and only one window poster in our street - for the Referendum Party.

The long, grinding struggle for votes has been conducted solely in the media as far our household is concerned.

No battle bus has passed through Bromley, that most suburban of outer south London

boroughs, and only one candidate's debate has been held, organised by the local Council of Churches. Not being church-going, we never heard about it, and the Conservative candidate, Eurosceptic Education minister Eric Forth, did not attend.

Derek Hamon, the Tory agent in the constituency since 1965, said that public meetings were now history. "We used to hold them but we stopped them because only half a dozen people would turn up. We used to knock small halls and

have about 30 party workers there to make up the numbers."

Labour's candidate for the Bromley and Chislehurst seat, Rob Yeldham, said the Post Office had delivered 300 of his election addresses in the wrong constituency. "They've said they would put matters right, but I've no way of knowing if they have."

The Liberal Democrat constituency agent, Michael Tutor, said that by now the School household should have had three leaflets from his party, two delivered by the Post Office and

## Downloading from the Internet without ISDN?

Here's something to pass the time.



Fig. 2. Lemon Golf is not always won by the expert golfer!

With BT's ISDN, downloading from the Internet is up to four times quicker than with an ordinary phone line. Because ISDN is digital, calls connect almost instantaneously and graphics can be downloaded much faster. ISDN pricing options start at a surprisingly low £199\*. For details, call BT Business Connections on Freefone 0800 800 800 now.

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Connection fee £199, quarterly line rental £138.76, minimum service period: 24 months (£105 per annum inclusive call allowance in first and second years).



# Major stands accused of complacency

Anthony Bevins  
Political Editor

John Major was publicly rebuked yesterday by a die-hard Tory activist who accused him of complacency and, ultimately, betrayal for leaving his party without the weapons to fight the election.

The onslaught – the more powerful because it came from someone clearly moved by her expectation of imminent defeat – was delivered on the final BBC *Election Call* by Margaret Curtiss, of Southampton, where the Conservatives expect to lose one marginal seat.

But Mr Major built on the

alibi he had first delivered on

Tuesday, that the media was obstructing his message and blocking his appeal to the voters.

No stranger to controversy, Mrs Curtiss featured in a front-page *Sunday Mirror* report about Southampton Tory sleaze in March. Yesterday, she cornered Mr Major with a grassroots view of her party's plight.

Accusing him of complacency, she said: "As far back as 1993, the party were well aware that the posts had changed, and yet we had minister after minister coming down to Southampton saying, 'Well, we have done it before, we can do it again'."

"You know yourself that to

govern effectively, you need

people not only at the top, but

people on the ground floor.

"We have lost very, very

many fine councillors over the

years through this failure to get

our message across, this utter

complacency, and ultimately

that means that it's a betrayal

of the country, as we both know

that only the Conservatives can

really be truly trusted to govern

the country."

"But we are going to lose to-

morrow, John, because we have

not got that message across, we

have not woken up in time to

the fact those goalposts have

moved and the Labour Party

have been a different animal,

and that ultimately has to rest

at your door."

Initially, Mr Major said he

was not complacent, council

seats would swing back to the

Conservatives, he had delivered

an economy in better

shape than it had been for gen-

erations, and the general elec-

tion was there to be won.

Mrs Curtiss said that while

she shared his Conservative

conviction, and she would be

voting Conservative, fingers

bad not been pulled out and

messages had not been deliv-

ered to the voters.

She told the Prime Minister:

"You have plenty of eager sol-

diers on the ground floor here.

We have been begging for you

to give us the weapons to fight.

We have not had those

weapons."

"We have been going on

with one hand tied behind our

back ... The buck has to stop

somewhere and that does stop

at you and I'm very sorry we're

going to lose tomorrow."

Mr Major said: "There is a

problem in politics these days.

However, whatever politicians

may say, the message the politi-

cians get is filtered through

what happens to be the story of

the day. I may speak at length

about the details of education

policy, but if that happens not

to be on the agenda of the day

of the media and others, you

hear very little about it."

"You hear about the squab-

ble of the day, the disagreement

of the day, the gaffe of the day,

the speculation of the day, the

poll of the day, but the details

of how I propose to improve ed-

ucation, what I propose to do

to the failing Labour education

authorities in the next Parlia-

ment, how I propose to ensure the

welfare state, they can't en-

capsulate in a soundbite."

On Tuesday, Mr Major com-

plained that his campaign had

effectively been hijacked by the

issue of Europe – swamping is-

**SUNDAY MIRROR**  
**SLEAZE**  
Top Tories used me as their sex toy

WIN £10,000  
3 DAYS TO PAY DAY  
12 INSTANT SCRATCH CARDS

How the *Sunday Mirror* featured Mrs Curtiss

suies like health and education – in spite of the fact that he had put it at the top of his own agenda in the middle of April.

Yesterday, Mr Major suggested that he was utterly unable to manipulate the news agenda.

"I might make a 40-minute speech this morning on the welfare state," he told the *Election Call* audience.

"I will get one minute of it on the news, if I'm lucky, and that minute, probably, a bit that creates controversy between the parties. It'll be criticised by Tony Blair, who hasn't read it, and by Paddy Ashdown, who hasn't understood it."

"That is a real democratic problem and Margaret Curtiss put her finger on it. I'm not complaining about it. It's a rough life, politics, but that is the reality of how it is these days."

## All's fairer for university applicants

Judith Judd  
Education Editor

strably fairer to potential participants than the post-Robins inheritance of 1979".

What is more, he argues, research shows that student achievement has remained as high as it was 18 years ago so the pool of talent is far from exhausted.

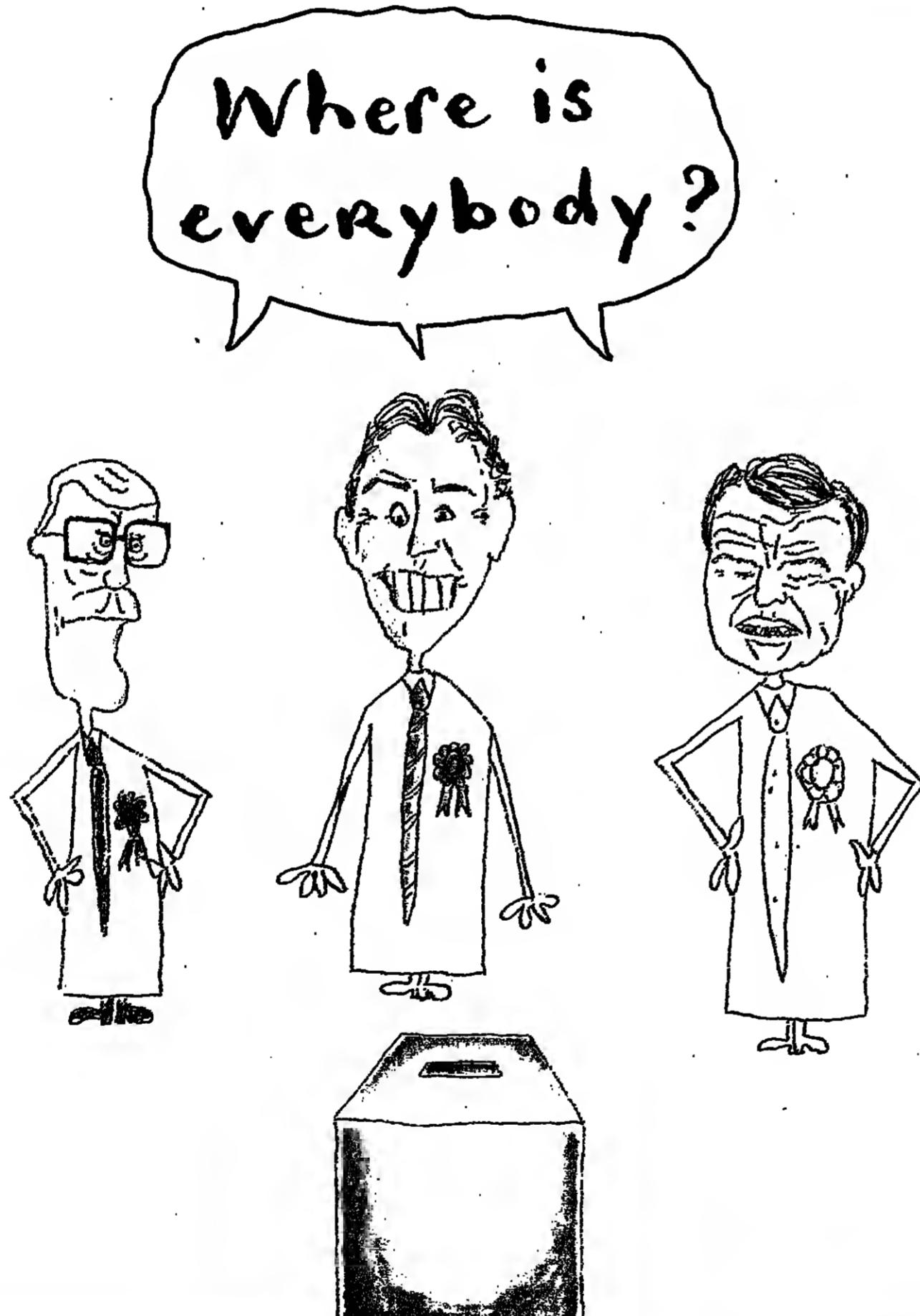
But, although the Government willed the end, it failed to will the means, the pamphlet says. "The stark conclusion on the resourcing of this enlarged, more accessible and hence fairer system of higher education is that government has failed to meet its implied commitments through public funding."

This year, the whole university sector is likely to go into financial deficit. Government spending on research and development has fallen sharply during the past decade, and the pay of university teachers is slipping further behind that of people in comparable professions.

Professor Watson said yesterday that the substantial investment needed for higher education would have to come from private as well as public sources.

It was vital, he said, for universities to continue to expand. "If we were to go back to a smaller and more selective system we would lose the social and economic gains we have made through expansion."

He pointed out that retrenchment worked against equal opportunities for all students. The proportion of working-class students went down between 1981 and 1984 when Sir Keith Joseph was squeezing university numbers.



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# The voice of Redditch – how three voters came to their decisions

## STAYING WITH THE TORIES



**Susan Lovett**, 38, is a former sales consultant who now stays at home to look after two young children. She has been unhappy with the Conservatives but early in the campaign decided they would still win her vote.

"At the start of the election I was disatisfied with Tony Blair's arrogance but recognised their record on the management of the country and could not see an alternative. Labour still seemed to be the same party but with a glossy finish – Tony Blair.

"At this general election, probably the most important one for decades, I think it's a great shame that the run-up so far has been dominated by smoke-screen electioneering, sleaze and lies, when the public need to be far better informed, given the importance of the issues, especially Europe.

"Tony Blair has smiled and preened his way into public view but when pressured, wavers and panics, as highlighted by his refusal to appear on a live question-and-answer show on Talk Radio. Are these the actions we want from our leader?

Indeed, apart from the politicians who have forced their views on us, I feel the most important aspect of the election are the unheard views of the Labour militants who are sitting in the background, waiting. Is Tony Blair strong enough to control them?

"I feel the campaign has turned into a Tony Blair campaign and not a Labour Party one.

"The splits within the Labour Party have been very well hidden. The Tony



## NOT VOTING

**Andrew Davies**, 19, is a pupil at Arrow Vale High School, a comprehensive in Redditch. He has decided not to vote.

"This will be the first election that I am entitled to vote in, but I am not going to. Not through apathy but through reasoned choice. I feel that I have been made into something of a 'leper' by people who have half-baked notions of what the parties offer and are voting merely because they can, rather than because they have understood what they are voting for. I am familiar with the argument that people have died so that I have the right to vote.

"It would be foolish to claim that I'm not going to vote because politicians don't do enough for 'young people'; rather, I am tak-

ing the idealistic and arrogant position that they don't deserve my vote. Too many ministers are caught out as moralising hypocrites and while I know that no one is perfect it is the smarm and pomposity that seems to surround politicians that annoys me so much.

"I have met all of my local candidates and Tony Blair visited our school. Nothing they said convinced me their party was any different to the others.

"Over the past six weeks we have been almost constantly assailed by one party or another claiming that the election will be decided on policies not personalities, and then within seconds, resort to backbiting and sniping. How is the country to prosper if we entrust it to spoilt children?"

Mondeo Man reporting by Michael Streeter

## SWITCHING TO NEW LABOUR



**Craig Coates**, 37, a local government worker, has always voted Conservative before and was a Thatcher supporter, but is switching to Labour.

"I was a Conservative voter because they were the best party for me and my family's personal circumstances. But now I think the country needs a change.

"I think the rot set in when Mrs Thatcher left in 1990, but I voted for John Major in 1992 because there was no way I could have voted for Neil Kinnock.

"Tony Blair is a big improvement on who they've had before.

"As for Paddy Ashdown, he's in the wrong party. If he had the backing of Labour it would be perfect for me.

"Not that I think Labour will necessarily be any better at running the country now – I just hope they will prove me wrong.

"The reason why I'm unhappy is that under the Conservatives the rich seem to be getting richer. They don't seem to care about people in the middle like me.

"Another thing is that I work all the hours and the wife works all the hours, and yet there are people who do no work and are able to sit in the pub all day.

"I think something should be done about it. I think the Conservatives used to do something but there are too many do-gooders now.

"Law and order is one of the main issues for me, and I think older people are concerned about job security.

"I'm not sure that Labour will be any bet-

ter, but the point is there is no other choice and I will vote to give them a chance.

"I think the election is now a no-horse race. Anything has got to be better than what we have at the moment."

# Forsyth warns Scots of leap into the abyss

Stephen Goodwin



Sounding like a man desperate at the prospect of losing both his Cabinet post and his parliamentary seat, Michael Forsyth yesterday warned Scots that home rule could rob their public services of up to £2.5bn.

Scotland stood on "the edge of a precipice", the Secretary of State for Scotland declared in the most apocalyptic contribution by any party on the final day of campaigning north of the border. A vote for anyone other than the Conservatives would be a "leap into the abyss". Living standards would fall, and health, housing and education services would suffer, he said.

In an apparent breach of convention, Mr Forsyth cited advice from officials within the Scottish Office who, he claimed, had told him the funding formula proposed by Labour and the Liberal Democrats for a devolved administration would cut £1.1bn to £1.5bn from Scotland's £14bn public expenditure grant. If the Treasury got its way, the cut could be £2.5bn, he claimed.

Normally civil servants are not dragged into the election battle. Mr Forsyth said he had been "reluctant" to reveal their advice, but as the Opposition had the opportunity of discussions with officials he would be "amazed" if they had not raised the funding issue. "If they have not addressed it, they are not fit to be in government."

Mr Forsyth's deployment of civil servants' advice on the last day of the campaign is a reflection of his own desperate

circumstances. Not only does the Tory party in Scotland face a hammering today, but his own seat of Stirling is one of the most vulnerable. Labour needs a swing of just 0.3 per cent to take it.

According to the Constitutional Convention – the blue-

According to Mr Forsyth, spending on health and local government is one-third more per head in Scotland than in England. No objective needs assessment had been carried out since 1979 and in the meantime Scotland had become one of the most prosperous places in the UK, he added.

George Robertson, the shadow Scottish Secretary, dismissed Mr Forsyth's claims as last-gasp scaremongering. "It bears no relation to any advice I have received from the Scottish Office on this point. A Labour chancellor will guarantee Scotland its fair share of Britain's resources side-by-side with home rule."

The Scottish National Party drove home its independence message at a gathering of about 80 supporters beneath the empty parliament building on Calton Hill in Edinburgh.

Alex Salmond, the party leader, predicted the SNP would win "a barrow load of seats" today. In reality, seven or eight, compared to four MPs when the election was called, would be counted a success. Any losses and Mr Salmond's job will be at risk.

The Liberal Democrats, meanwhile, were clinging to the hope that they will become the second party in Scotland. Sir David Steel said a substantial group of Liberal Democrats in the next Parliament could provide a "more radical edge" to a Blair government.

A large number of voters felt the Tories and Labour were offering "something like a choice between Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola", Sir David said.

## HOW I WILL VOTE: TOM CONTI

# I'd rather have independents but it's not going to happen this time



How will you vote  
Liberal Democrat

Have you always supported them?

I have for a while. There was a time when I didn't vote at all, as a kind of stupid protest. I'm sure the parties were all terribly upset. But I do still find the two-party system ludicrous. I find party politics ludicrous, really. I'd rather have independents, but that's clearly not going to happen this time.

The most impressive thing about the Liberal Democrats is about their education policy: classes are free up to the age of 11, for example. It really should be classes of 10 up to the age of 12, if you're going to bite into the downward spiral, but I think the Liberal Democrat policies are the best.

is education the most important issue in this election? Yes. Absolutely, the most. If you don't have an educated popu-

children as adults, and their children in turn. Education is not just about reading and writing, it's about how to get on together, and having respect for one another, which seems to have gone completely now.

Also the Liberal Democrat health policy is good; they have a recruitment plan for doctors and nurses, which I think is so

You were born a Scot; do you have any feelings for the SNP?

No. But then, I don't live in Scotland and I haven't lived in Scotland for a quarter of a century, so I'm not going to make pronouncements for what I think they should do.

Have there been any particularly important influences on your political views?

Well, I've been through the whole thing. I was severely left in my twenties, but I started being brought up as a Tory, a

middle-class Scot. Then after my

20s, I became more left-wing.

Are you looking forward to 2 May?

The first day of the new Government? Well... how much change? Not a great deal. But that's one good thing about the parties at the moment. There's not going to be a huge swing to the left.

Are there any politicians you admire in other parties?

Yes. There are good people in the other parties, of course.

That's part of the tragedy of the party political system, isn't it?

If you could make up a cabinet of people like Gordon Brown,

Ben Summers

## Negative campaigning works

Glenda Cooper  
Social Affairs Correspondent

tal, London, who conducted the review, said that people have a generally positive view of others with the result that negative information is seen as more salient.

"If one expects the average person to be basically decent, honest and polite then if someone is presented as dishonest this would give a more marked impression," he said.

Given equal amounts of positive and negative information about a candidate, the overall impression of voters is skewed towards the negative, says a review of the data available in this month's *Psychiatric Bulletin*.

Dr Nicholas Beecroft, registrar at the Maudsley Hospital

what the candidate was accused of.

"This single sentence was enough to sway the voters against the candidate. Adultery was less negative than corruption. [And] it did not matter whether the accusation came from a partisan or independent," he added.

Dr Beecroft said that he personally thought the Tories' "demon eyes" campaign had been the most effective image in the run-up to this election: "It was very clever. It reminded people of last time when it looked like Labour were going to win and then at the last minute long-standing fears made people

change. Excessive fear is counterproductive."

"Although most people see negative campaigning for what it is and find it unethical, they still find it more informative."

But he warned that no politician could hope to win an election just by smearing their opponents. Emotions also played a larger part in how people voted than their beliefs about them. "If you look at past elections – Thatcher, Reagan – there are great emotional factors involved, the fact that someone was a great leader or they had a great story to tell. It is a phenomenon that is very difficult to pin down."

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# Becalmed on the Sahara's ocean of heat: The refugees dreaming of a homeland

Robert Fisk  
Wlays Awsserd camp, south-west Algeria

Khalifa Ben Bashir, 77 years old and almost toothless, greeted me at the door of his grey concrete shack beneath the white desert sun. A veteran of the Spanish army of the Sahara, he now lives with 140,000 other Saharawi refugees amid an ocean of heat, waiting – along with his four wives and seven sons – for his return to an independent Arab Democratic Saharan Republic that does not exist.

"We must have children to make up for the thousands we lost in exile," he said, introducing me to his first wife, 41-year-old Fatima. The sand fissled into our faces and Khalifa smiled his broad toothless grin at me – toothless because the faeces-contaminated drinking water rots the teeth and gums of all the refugees by mid-age.

The sand creeps through the camp in waves, great windswept seas of grit and dust that creep

65 but looks as if she is approaching 80, a thin woman in black with beautiful eyes and skin as wrinkled as the sand dunes outside their home. "Many have died in this war so men must be re-born," she says quietly. "The Moroccans are very, very many – the Saharawi people are not. So we must have children."

She has a point. Perhaps 35 million people live in Morocco; the Saharawi population – both in the fetid Algerian camps and in the Western Sahara under Moroccan occupation – number scarcely 200,000. No wonder the United Nations' efforts to arrange a referendum on the future of the Western Sahara collapsed under the weight of identification procedures. Should one include all those who once lived in the region, accepting the Polisario's figure for the camp population of 170,000? Or the Moroccans trucked into Laayoune and the other towns of the Western Sahara to take the place of those who fled to Algeria on the Polisario's orders 22 years ago?

Given the filth in which most of the Saharawis live, their battle for re-birth – in the most literal sense of the word – is an all-consuming one. Daniel Mora-Castro, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' senior water development expert in Tindouf, understands what their struggle means in human terms. He treats their tragedy in stoic terms. "There are very high levels of organic pollution in the drinking water," he says. "There are no latrines in the camps. Water holes are open when the sirocco comes and the wind blows faeces and sand into the water."

Mr Mora-Castro's story builds to a fearful climax that comes quite unexpectedly. "We have a system of measuring the *E. coli* bacteriological indicator," he goes on. "If it's 0.1 in water it's potable; if it's 1.5, action should be taken. Five to 50 means it needs urgent action. Over 50 per 100 millilitres of water needs drastic action. But we are finding a figure of 2,500. These people are drinking shit soup."

Sulphates in the water act as a laxative. High levels of fluorine mean that 90 per cent of the Saharawis have missing teeth. Iodine in the water has affected thyroid glands; 10 per cent of the population have goitres. Newly-born children have poor respiration – they call it the "blue children's disease" – and

Sirka, Hama's mother, is only



Forgotten: Hama Nighiba, widow of a Polisario soldier and remarried to Mohamed, with some of her family, including her mother, Sirka. Photograph: Robert Fisk

no one knows if the contamination has affected the aquifers as well as the wells. Giveo 185 water hand-pumps in 1983, the Polisario failed to maintain them. Only two still work; there is a cemetery for the rest – no

one has thought to cannibalise them for spare parts.

The Saharawi may demand

independence – and hope that

UN envoy James Baker can pro-

vide it for them – but they are

at the end of the line. An in-

tensely private people, they now

watch aid workers inspecting

their homes, deciding how much

food they may be allotted. "They

feel embarrassed and controlled

by the non-governmental or-

ganisations," another UN work-

er says. "These people feel violated in this way."

Hama Nighiba has eaten no meat in years. All her children have rotten teeth. But she re-

jects the idea of defeat. "We are

not like the Palestinians," she

says. "We still have part of our

land – the liberated area [east of the Moroccan sand wall].

This is Algeria and it is not our land – that is why we build no

mosques here. We can pray only when we return home."

They feel violated when Western people come into their tents to monitor their food

past the tents and stone huts, moving in front of our eyes, physically passing us – covering our feet, ankle deep – as we talk in the immensity of colourless light or the profound darkness of near-windowless rooms. Hama Nighiba, beneath a roof of corrugated iron, was married to Nami, a Polisario soldier who was killed in 1980.

Living only 200 metres from Khalifa, she has four children by her "martyr" and another four by Mohamed, her second husband. "I met Mohamed in the normal way," she says gently. "You know we have nothing here – no discos, no entertainment, no nothing. So we drink tea and visit each other's huts and Mohamed came one day and we talked and met again and then he said: 'I want to marry you' and asked my mother's permission."

Sirka, Hama's mother, is only

## significant shorts

### Mobutu agrees to talks with rebel leader

The United States envoy Bill Richardson said yesterday that Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko and the rebel leader Laurent Kabila would meet tomorrow on a South African navy vessel. Earlier Mr Kabila appealed to the international community to force Mr Mobutu to attend talks at sea to avoid a battle for Kinshasa.

Mr Kabila, head of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL), said: "Only talks will avoid a battle for Kinshasa. But if Mobutu cannot come to talks then it is business as usual for us. It means we will have to take Kinshasa."

Reuters – Lubumbashi

### Albania blast kills 22

A weapons depot exploded yesterday in Burrel, 20 miles north-east of the Albanian capital Tirana, killing at least 22 people, police said. The cause of the explosion was not immediately known. Munitions at the depot were stored in underground tunnels. Police said most of the dead were inside the tunnel when it exploded.

AP – Tirana

### Texan breakaways held

Seven men were detained by police who said they were planning to join 13 Texas secessionists holed up near Fort Davis. Members of the Republic of Texas group, which claims Texas was illegally annexed to the US in the 19th century, have been in a standoff with police since Sunday.

AP – Fort Davis, Texas

### Crash jet 'off flight path'

The Kazakh jetliner that collided with a Saudi Boeing 747 over India last November, killing all 349 people aboard both planes, had descended from its scheduled flight path, the Saudi airline claimed yesterday. The Kazakhstan airline Ilyushin-76 descended to an altitude of 14,000ft, about 1,000ft below what New Delhi's air traffic controllers had ordered, a lawyer told a judge investigating the crash.

AP – New Delhi

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## international

# Italy's men of violence throw off the state's chains

Andrew Gumbel  
Palermo

It was the defining moment of the Cold War in Italy, the moment when the Christian Democrat establishment made its unholy alliance with the world of organised crime and sealed it with blood. Fifty years ago today, a crowd of peasants celebrating May Day in the rugged hills of the Palermo hinterland were mown down by machine-guns determined to deter them once and for all from voting for the Communists.

The massacre at Portella della Ginestra, coming just a few days after an unexpected victory for the left in Sicily's first ever regional elections, claimed 11 dead and 55 wounded. It was a remarkably low casualty toll given the narrowness of the pass where they were gathered and the appalling wounds inflicted by bullets ricochetting off the rocks.

## The new MAFIA

As intended, though, it shocked the Sicilian peasantry back into the arms of the establishment, an establishment in which the interests of the big landowners, the Christian Democrats, the Church and the Mafia all converged with the full approval and even encouragement of the US government.

The exact chain of responsibility for the massacre has never been established, although it almost certainly won the tacit approval of all the big power-brokers and attracted no more than a murmur of disquiet from the Christian Democrats' notoriously repressive Interior Minister Mario Scelba. The

man who organised the attack, the charismatic bandit Salvatore Giuliano, was no more than a tool of the larger forces but he nevertheless enjoyed their protection for a long time afterwards.

While ceaseless attempts were theoretically being made to capture Giuliano, he was in fact holding court to a never-ending stream of journalists and admirers at his home town of Montelepre just over the hills

from Portella della Ginestra. "The only people unable to find Giuliano were the police," a court sentence concluded years later, by which time Giuliano had been betrayed and killed, and the *pax mafiosa* in Sicily had

become so normal it had lost much of its power to shock public opinion.

The Mafia thus re-established itself as a bulwark against Communism. It remained on intimate, if occasionally ambivalent, terms with the Christian Democrats throughout the Cold War as Italy's political system became increasingly bogged down and Cosa Nostra built up a vast international empire in drugs smuggling and other rackets.

Some of the lessons of Portella della Ginestra are still valid today, notably that the fortunes of any mafia crime organisation – whether in Sicily, Calabria, Naples, northern Italy or elsewhere – depend largely on the complicity, or at least the weakness, of the state structure with which it must compete for control of territory.

Of course, the big change has been the end of the Cold War. In Italy's case it occurred not so much in 1989 as in 1992, when the Christian Democrat-led order collapsed under an intolerable burden of corruption scandals and the Mafia, taking advantage of the political chaos, launched a full-scale war on the establishment. It was in 1992 that Giovanni Falcone, the magistrate who did more than anyone before or since to penetrate the secrets of Cosa Nostra and dismantle its leadership, was blown up along with his wife and police escort on the way into Palermo from the airport. Within two months, Falcone's closest colleague Paolo Borsellino was also eliminated in a massive car bomb that exploded outside his house.

The result of these murders, the most shocking of a long string of so-called *cavadori ecclerici* or "illustrious corpses", was to galvanise popular opinion, the politicians, the police, the magistrature and horned members of Cosa Nostra itself into an unprecedented counter-attack on the Mafia. Over the next three years, with the help of new legislation and a witness protection programme, hundreds of new informants came forward and one high-profile arrest after another was made, particularly in the upper echelons of the Corleones, the clan that ran Cosa Nostra in the 1980s and early 1990s and was responsible for its strategy of terror against the state.

Trials for the murders of Falcone and Borsellino were put together in record time, based on the kind of detailed evidence of which most prosecutors can usually only dream.

Meanwhile, all sorts of dirty linen started coming out. It led, most spectacularly, to the arrest and trial of Giulio Andreotti, the grand old man of the Christian Democrat party, on charges of mafia collusion and murder. But there were also precious new insights into such mysteries as the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro, the Christian Democrat leader, in 1978 and the death of Roberto Calvi, the banker with connections in both the Mafia and the Vatican, in London in 1982.

Then something happened. Part of it was no doubt a loss of momentum – these things have always gone in waves – but mostly it was due to an attempted political counter-revolution bent on rolling back the extraordinary achievements of the judges. When Silvio Berlusconi, a man himself under investigation for gross malpractice in his media empire, became prime minister in 1994, he all but stopped the magistrates dead in their tracks and the work of the parliamentary anti-Mafia commission ground to a near standstill.



Family ties: Unconcerned Mafia suspects are led to the courtroom following the Portella della Ginestra machinegun massacre of 1947

Photograph: AP

## Murder of a magistrate



End of a gangbuster: The wreck of Falcone's car after a bomb killed him, his wife and three bodyguards in 1992

## Falcone's brief promise of hope

Giovanni Falcone was not only the most effective magistrate ever to take on the Mafia, he virtually invented the techniques necessary to burrow into the organisation's secret world.

It was Falcone who first induced a senior mafioso, Tommaso Buscetta, to break the organisation's fabled code of silence. It was Falcone who masterminded the huge trials of the mid-1980s, in which hundreds of mafiosi started out of cages at the back of the specially-built courtroom in Palermo as life sentence after life sentence was passed upon them.

And it was Falcone, along with his distinguished colleague Paolo Borsellino, who came to understand the mentality of the mafioso and laid bare the structure of the

organisation – its strange codes and initiation rites, its values and its strategies.

In a place like Sicily, where the boundaries of state authority and mafia infiltration are never clear, the work of a magistrate is about far more than a simple upholding of the law. After his initial successes, Falcone had to spend much of his time protecting himself from poison within the system – including the Palermo prosecutors' office itself.

By 1992, he had been forced to leave Palermo and took up the job of nationwide "super-prosecutor". On 23 May that year, he was on his way from Palermo airport into the city when an enormous explosion tore open the road surface, claiming not only his life but that of his wife and three bodyguards. He was 53.

Falcone's achievement remains unique. Nothing like the same body of knowledge has ever emanated from other Mafia regions such as Calabria or Naples. There are now more than 1,000 informants spilling out details of Cosa Nostra's activities and murky links with the establishment. It remains to be seen how much longer, without Falcone, they will keep talking.

Andrew Gumbel



Falcone: Broke the Mafia's code of silence

Mr Berlusconi's downfall at the end of 1994 was followed by a year and half of political stagnation, and then the arrival of the present centre-left government led by Romano Prodi. Despite the presence of several prominent anti-Mafia campaigners in the ruling coalition, however, yet more ground is being lost. Why?

Partly it is because of the weakness of the Prodi government, which relies on a fringe left-wing party to make up its majority in parliament and has concentrated its limited strength on getting Italy into the single currency. Partly it is because of a calculated risk taken in the name of lasting constitutional reform. An extraordinary cross-party commission is currently examining changes to the electoral system, the balance of power between the president, the government and parliament, and also the judicial system.

The problem is that in order to get Mr Berlusconi to agree to a decent electoral system, he is being effectively bought off with judicial reforms that risk unravelling much of the anti-

Mafia magistrates' good work. Instead of helping the magistrates by bolstering their presence in crime-ridden cities like Reggio Calabria and increasing the efficiency of the appealingly slow Italian court system, the emphasis is all on reining in the judges and subjecting them to greater legislative and political control.

The Mafia is taking full advantage of the signals emanating from Rome, and Sicily in particular has slumped back into a state of despondency. The positive results of the mid-1990s are still being felt, notably in Calabria where a slew of recent arrests has weakened some of the most powerful groups operating their world-wide racketts from there.

But the risk, as the magistrates closest to the coal face can attest, is that life is going to get a lot worse again very quickly. "The Mafia is beginning to build up resistance to the tools we have devised to combat its influence," said the Palermo prosecutor Antonio Mignola. "If we do not update our weapons then the next round will be lost."

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## international

Man of substance sizes up Brunei trade prospects



Chancellor Kohl with Brunei's Foreign Minister, Mohamed Bolkiah, on arrival in the capital, Bandar Seri Begawan, to promote trade. Photograph: AP

## Warships and planes hunt Antarctic fish raiders

Ray Liley  
Associated Press

Wellington - France and Britain have sent warships to the Antarctic, and New Zealand is sending surveillance planes aloft to stop an international fleet of ships poaching the prized toothfish.

Strict controls were imposed on Antarctic fish resources last year under a 23-nation Antarctic fisheries control agreement, known as the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.

But "reflagged" fishing vessels from Spain, Norway and even the United States - all co-signers to the agreement - are among those plundering toothfish, according to New Zealand

government officials. More than 40 vessels have taken over 30,000 tonnes of toothfish in South Africa's sub-Antarctic waters, Simon Upton, New Zealand's associate for Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister, said yesterday.

"Toothfish has a very high value in Southeast Asia. In Japan, it is almost worth bars of gold," said Commandant Bernard O'Mahony, spokesman for France's Marine Nationale. O'Mahony confirmed French forces had intercepted two fishing vessels in the protected zone around its sub-Antarctic Crozet Island.

On 31 March, the Singaporean ship *Belge III* was apprehended carrying toothfish. On April 19, the Portuguese

ship *Mar L'Argo* was caught. "Since mid-March, the French government insisted on reinforcing the presence of the Marine Nationale in this area in order to protect it," he said.

Jean-Claude Nola, a spokesman for the French Foreign Ministry, said a frigate and two towboats had been sent to the area. South Africa is reported ready to send warships and maritime surveillance

airplanes to try to halt the illegal fishing.

Poachers are raiding toothfish areas around France and Australia's sub-Antarctic Heard and McDonald Islands. McDonald Islands. Britain has already used gunboats to chase out Spanish and Norwegian fishing boats around

New Zealand's sub-Antarctic

Falklands. Those ships reportedly fly Chilean and Argentine flags of convenience.

Not much is known of the fish, first named five years ago

the "Patagonian toothfish." It is

a long fish with a large mouth

and is believed to be bottom-

dwelling, living off cod. It lives

for up to 25 years.

Spanish and Norwegian

boats are also deliberately

breaching the agreements made

by their governments, using

Panamanian and Vanuatu

flags to disguise themselves.

New Zealand officials said,

speaking on condition of

anonymity, US and Japanese

vessels were also reported to be

involved, they said.

Any military protection of the

region is handicapped by the

vast distances involved and in-

fluenced by the role of the

gateway countries, New

Zealand, Australia, Chile, Ar-

gentina and South Africa.

pendency are seen as a new area

for potential plunder. Upton

said a New Zealand Air Force

surveillance plane had already

made one trip to the Antarctic

and it would be returning regu-

larly. He said the illegal fish-

ing threatened the fragile

Antarctic ecosystem.

"It may pose a threat to the

waters south of New Zealand,

if reports that this fishing is con-

tinuing to spread westwards

into French and Australian

Antarctic waters, are borne

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# Yes, quite a long embrace. How was it for you?

Finally, it's over. The foreplay has been strenuous and perhaps a little laboured, but today at last comes relief. Today you get to do your civic duty, to have your way with the politicians rather than the other way around. Or (since you have the choice) you might choose to pass up the once-in-every-five-years chance to tip your weight into the balance. Today we'll set aside bow you vote (or not), and instead consider whether it - this slightly more protracted than usual date with democracy - was good for you (or not).

It has been a campaign where many people got their *enrhu* in first. Issues, personalities, party formations could all have been equally well displayed within three weeks. Even if an informal contest had not been running since last autumn, six weeks is too long. We do not need to test politicians' stamina, or their capacity to leap in and out of helicopters, buses and automobiles dozens of times in a day. Yet fixed-term parliaments - a demand of electoral reformers since the Chartists - would not get round the problem, because the whole parade drags on for a couple of years, as the constant campaigning that goes on in the United States shows. Would a future prime minister be tempted to extend the formal period again? It's unlikely: if he becomes an ex-prime minister, John Major will have to live with his regrets.

But the length of the campaign has not been the only complaint. Some people are worried that democracy is being tainted by the slick professionalism of modern campaigning. Spinners have been busier than spiders, and people are moaning that the whole business has been so packaged and controlled and pre-fixed and sound-bited that it's not real. Oh no, the lament goes up, American superficiality has finally destroyed our fine old hustings traditions.

That is an understandable anxiety, but mostly, thank goodness, unfounded. Professional campaigning is a natural result of multiplying media outlets. And multiplying media outlets have given voters more opportunity to listen to, challenge, question, laugh at, weep over what politicians say and think that at any time in the history of our parliamentary democracy. John Major's complaint yesterday that the media did not allow him to get the message over would be laughable if it were not pathetic. The truth is that people have been soaked repeatedly from head to foot with the issues for the past many months, and forcibly ducked and drenched for the past six weeks.

For all the stage management of events, the campaign seems at times to have been nothing but the aggressive quizzing of leaders. It has not just been the public's proxies in the shape of television and radio journalists asking

lively questions in real time. The public themselves have had direct access in a variety of phone-ins and audience participation shows. All the right questions have at one time and another been asked and, more or less adequately, answered.

The idea that somehow the system has conspired to deny access to the "real issues" is thoroughly disproved by the energetic presence of the single-theme parties. Sir James Goldsmith has done the electorate sterling service in one sense, at least: that portion of it that thinks Europe the great matter has an opportunity to exercise its choice. Anarchists, clowns, anti-abortionists, and libertarians have their choices, too. A fashionable cry lately has been "none of the above". We worry about the apathy of our post-Thatcher youth, the ones who slump back and say they don't want to vote, oh no, because it's all a lot of *cantages*. A set of self-appointed generational spokespeople has proclaimed its disaffection. What's new? Young people always have registered less and voted less and doubtless always will - for the good reason that they have more pressing calls on their time. There has been detectable, none the less, an uncomfortable whingeing

tone in the vox pops collected by us and other media from young people. It suggests elections are like a visit to a burger outlet where, when triple-decker with fries is not on the menu, a keening note of self pity is sounded. But parties are more than bucksters, just as citizens are more than consumers. If none of the above, where are the new parties that would reflect what young people say are their concerns; where are the youthful advocates of those institutional reforms that would allow new political formations to flourish?

Modern Britain is not Aristotle's Athens, where the citizens can be expected to gather, figuratively, on the hillside to debate and decide the fate of the *polis*. Yet enthusiasm for gadgery suggests there are ways in which people can, from the comfort of their armchairs, zap into democratic participation. Government by plebiscite is on our doorsteps. (All parties favour a referendum on a single currency. Labour picks up an old Michael Heseltine suggestion that local authorities conduct polls before they decide their budgets. Promising, this, isn't it?) Meanwhile, nearer home, one of the results of the reforms in public service management in recent years - by no means all of them of Thatcherite inspiration - has been to encourage local political activity around schools, hospitals and housing estates. In other words, there is no shortage of democratic opportunity.

What about democratic will? The acid test is election turnout. In most parts of the country, the forecast is for a sunny spring day. Last time round, in 1992, some 78 per cent of eligible voters turned out, a magnificent figure considering the proportion of people on the electoral rolls who are aged, infirm or just plain indifferent. Our prediction for today is that that total will be exceeded. British democracy can certainly improve, but it's alive and kicking. Give it a go.

## Public asset: please queue

In season, the pony path up Ben Nevis gets heavily congested, the sides of the mountain erode and the summit becomes a rubbish dump. The path exemplifies the classic problem of free access to a public facility leading to destruction of the asset. (We report today another example: the threat to fish stocks in the southern oceans.) The textbook response is to charge, limiting access by price. But Ben Nevis can hardly be fenced off, with guards in Fort William and along Glen Nevis stopping climbers coming up the back way. A possible solution is a new tourist slogan: "Get away from it all in Scotland: queue to climb a mountain."

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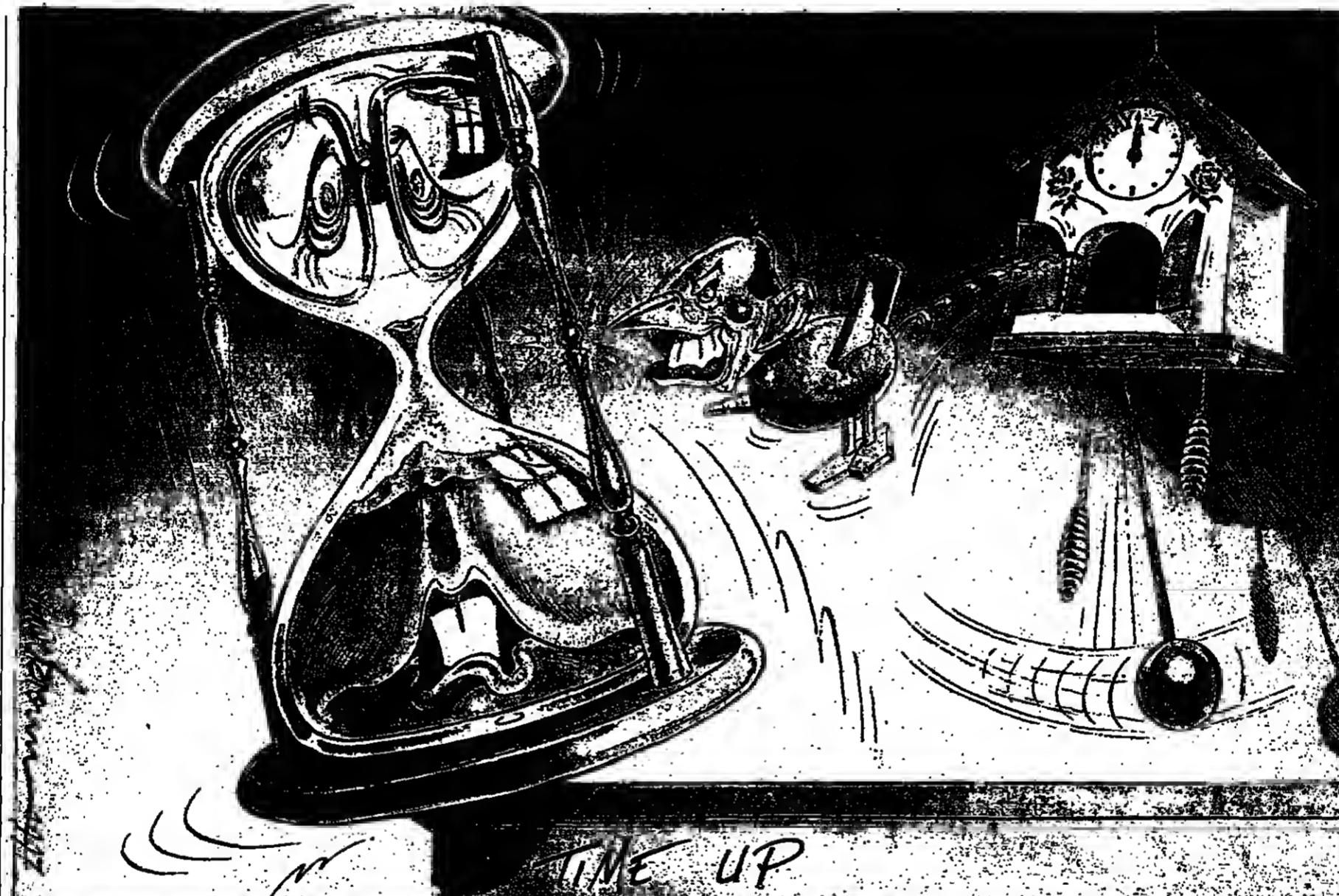
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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



### Whoever wins, taxes will have to go up

Sir: Gavyn Davies (28 April) is normally such a level-headed commentator that it is disappointing to find him indulging in wishful thinking. But his argument that taxes will not need to rise after the election really does not pass muster.

Mr Davies says, and it is hard to disagree, that it is very hard to imagine a Labour chancellor sticking to the very low planned growth figures for public spending. He then argues that this is not really a problem because the Government is assuming that the public finances would go into a budget surplus of 2 per cent of GDP in 2001-2, the last year of the next parliament. If the new chancellor set a budget deficit of 1 per cent of GDP - which would meet the "golden rule" of public finance whereby the Government should only borrow for capital investment - then he would be able to add 3 per cent of GDP to public spending, or some £27bn. And if this is spread over five years, the growth rate of spending can go up to 2 per cent.

There are two problems with this argument. The first is that the Government has probably been over-optimistic about its revenue projections, because it has assumed that the economy will continue to grow at 2.5 per cent a year. A more realistic long-run growth path would probably be 2.2 per cent. So there will be less tax revenue than projected, even if the recent holes in VAT and excises are plugged.

The second problem is that the extra spending can only be spread over five years if borrowing is higher in the early years than is currently planned. This is not sensible, since the economy is already showing signs of overheating (with pay pressures rising, for example). A more relaxed fiscal stance would risk raising interest rates compared with what they would otherwise be. It would also risk raising the exchange rate, which is already more than 16 per cent higher than it was at the end of 1995, and is hurting many exporters. Such a dose of "Reaganomics" would impose a cost in terms of our long-run growth prospects.

There is only one option which will deliver both credible spending plans and a better-balanced recovery which does not hit the tradeable sector, and that is to finance extra public spending through higher taxes rather than more borrowing.

CHRISTOPHER HUHNE  
Economics Director, IBCA Ltd  
London EC2

### Homeless suffer new regulations

Sir: Shortly before Parliament rose for the election the Government introduced regulations that would, if passed, limit housing benefit for single private-sector tenants under 60 to the cost of a single room with shared facilities.

As representatives of organisations working in the fields of housing and homelessness, we believe that these restrictions would lead to an increase in homelessness and would, by making it more difficult for people in benefit to find acceptable housing in the private sector, penalise both responsible landlords and prospective tenants.

### How to pick the winners by name

Sir: With this election remarkable for lack of clear blue water between the two main parties and lack of clear blue touch-paper to ignite popular interest, voters might take a diversionary interest in that largely overlooked aspect, the frequency of the names of candidates.

We therefore call upon whichever party is in government after 1 May to accept the SSAC's recommendation and withdraw these regulations until a proper evaluation of the effects of existing restrictions, both on individuals and on the private rented market, has been carried out.

DAVID WARNER  
Director, Homeless Network  
JON FITZMAURICE  
Director, CHAR Housing Campaign for Single People

CHRIS HOLMES  
Director, Shelter  
JOHN GOWANS  
The Salvation Army

ALAN WARD  
National Federation of Residential Landlords  
London SW1

### News reviewed

Sir: As I remove the note under my doorknob reading *No political canvassers please*, I wonder whether, having deprived us of news for six weeks, the media will make amends by providing résumés of what has been going on in the world.

KROWAT  
Sherborne, Dorset

Name	Men	Women	Con	Lab	L-D	other
Smith	29	9 (24%)	5	10	8	15
Jones	21	9 (30%)	4	10	9	7
Brown(e)	24	1 (4%)	2	5	6	12
Williams	18	6 (25%)	3	7	8	6
Clarke(e)	17	3 (15%)	4	8	2	6
Taylor	15	4 (21%)	5	5	5	4

more than 20 per cent of women. The Browns, on the other hand, display abnormally high sexism, with only 1 of their 25 candidates a woman.

Overall it is to the Taylors that we must look for best name at this election. They score 21 per cent of women and they are evenly spread in terms of party affiliation. By contrast, the Smiths and Browns are clearly over-representing minor parties, and the Clark(e)s have a real problem attracting Conservatives and Lib Dems.

The Taylors are also to be admired for their modest and reasonable ambition. Whereas the Joneses are seeking to increase their representation in the House of Commons from 8 to 30, the Smiths from only 6 to a massive 38 and the Williamses from a meagre 2 to an outrageous 24, the Taylors are going for steadier growth from their present 6 MPs to a maximum of 19.

The only blot is evidence of some infighting. There are two Taylors head-to-head in two different constituencies. However, the Williamses are fighting each other in three constituencies. The Clark(e)s are the same to be

admired here, with 20 of them fighting in 20 different constituencies.

JON TAYLOR  
Aber, Central Scotland

### Truth in polls

Sir: Conrad Jameson's article about the opinion polls (24 April) makes no contribution whatsoever to aiding understanding why poll results taken at the same time sometimes diverge, or why the polls failed to predict the result of the 1992 election.

His thesis appears to be that so many respondents lie to pollsters as to make accurate polling impossible, and that this was the cause of the poll's error in 1992.

The theory of lying respondents was investigated and specifically rejected by an exhaustive report following a two-year inquiry sponsored by the Market Research Society; it simply does not explain the facts. The explanations the MRS report endorses, with 160 pages of evidence - late swing, differential refusal and failures in the quota sampling - Jameson dismisses or ignores.

The only blot is evidence of some infighting. There are two Taylors head-to-head in two different constituencies. However, the Williamses are fighting each other in three constituencies. The Clark(e)s are the same to be

It is Jameson's explanation that is unsupported by the evidence, not that unanimously reached by the MRS Inquiry team of experts, which included independent academics and market researchers as well as pollsters.

ROBERT M WORCESTER  
Chairman, Market and Opinion Research International  
London SW1

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## analysis

# Shaken? Vote for the cocktail party



In an age of blended ideological flavours and shockingly decadent political habits, Paul Vallely toasts the cocktail as the perfect accompaniment to election night

**Y**ou could always lay in what the more vulgar Tory MPs nowadays tend to call a crate of champagne. But bubbly - crated, cased or solus - is a risky drink for election night. So much can go wrong, and when it does champagne loses its lustre and tastes of foolishness or presumption.

No, given the mix-and-match policies of modern political parties, a far more appropriate tipple for tonight is the cocktail. It has, after all a respectable political history. Winston Churchill was big on martinis, as were his chief comrades in arms: Roosevelt - the man who poured the first legal martini in the United States at the end of the ill-starred Prohibition experiment - used to ply Stalin with them in what a presidential aide called the "four martinis and let's have an agreement" era.

And the cocktail is something of an index of political mood. If cocktail consumption does not correlate exactly with down-turns in the economy, it does seem to have a link with "feelgood factor" or rather the lack of it. Think of the Twenties - economically roaring, but ending in economic depression. Or the sophisticated Thirties, blithely fox-trotting towards world war. Just as sales of chocolate soar during a recession, so the cocktail flourishes when people most need compensatory cheer: small comforts burgeon in troubled times. That's my theory, anyway.

Salvatore Calabrese agrees. He is the chief bartender at that favoured hang-out of wealthy Americans, The Lanesborough hotel in London (before the Thatcher era it was, aptly enough, an NHS hospital). Agreeing



with the customer is part of the armoury of skills a good bartender must possess. He also disagrees: "Cos if people only drank them during the bad times, I'd be out of business." Which, thankfully, the best martini-maker in the capital, is not.

But then the cocktail has always been a sign of contradiction, a mark of simultaneous frivolity and finesse. "I must get out of these wet clothes and into a dry martini," wagged some sophisticate in the Thirties. Three decades on Dave Brubeck's sax player could find no way of describing the tone he was attempting to extract except by saying that he aimed to sound like a dry martini. Sgr Calabrese cannot dispute that since both quotes come from the neat little book, full of splendid period illustrations, he has just produced called *Classic Cocktails* (Prion Books), which charts the history of the admixture.

It is full of improbable anecdotes about the genesis of the term - legends about cocks' feathers, about a chemist from New Orleans (*coqueterie* is French for egg cup), about the drinking ceremonies of a Mexican King. There are almost as many rival claims as there are for the provenance of the martini (the town of Martinez in California, various Italian harmen in New York hotels, or the Martini & Henry rifle used by the British army between 1871 and 1891).

Whatever, the history of the

cocktail, and in particular the martini, is the history of our social mores. The word may have been first recorded in 1806 in the *Balance and Columbian Repository*, and mixtures like Black Velvet may have been traced to 1861, when at Brooks' in London a barman coloured the club champagne with Guinness in mourning for Prince Albert, but it was a political act that defined the drink. Prohibition, which ran in the United States from 1921 to 1933, was the mother of the cocktail. Some 70 per cent of today's cocktails were created during the era of the speak-easy in which men like Al Capone and Joe Kennedy, father of John F. made their reputations and money.

And so it went. The Fifties was the decade of the three-martini lunch (as well as - not instead of) and the Sixties - along with Carnaby Street, Kubrik and Courteau - brought fashion the Brandy Alexander (brandy, crème de cacao and cream) into the height of swinging sophistication. Then the film of *Casino Royale* popularised the massive sophistication of James Bond's vodka martini "shaken not stirred" - a thought that horrified purists who drank it stirred so that, as Somerset Maugham once put it, "the molecules [of the gin and vermouth] lie sensuously on top of one another".

But then came Thatcherism, with its shabbiness and champagne, Lawsonism with its boom and

## FLOATING VOTER

### An Election Night Cocktail

created for 'The Independent' by Salvatore Calabrese head cocktail barman at the Lanesborough Hotel, London and author of *Classic Cocktails* (Prion Books, £9.99)

1. Mix a few drops Grenadine, 2cl Fraine du Bois liqueur, 1cl Cointreau and a little lemon juice. Shake. Pour into a high-ball glass full of ice.

2. Pour in a mixture of fresh orange and mango juice. Trickle over a bar spoon so the yellow layer floats on the red.

3. In a separate glass mix 2.5cl of Beefeater gin and a few drops of blue curaçao. Float the mixture on the Lib Dem layer.

4. Garnish with a strawberry (very British).

5. Serve with three straws, one in each layer, to enable all three to be tasted together while keeping the red, yellow and blue distinct. The Tories get the short straw but Sgr Calabrese is too diplomatic to point this out.

schnapps, lemon and cranberry juice). At Bar Ten in Glasgow the best-seller is margaritas and at The Courtyard in Leeds they get off on chocolate-flavoured vodka. It's back with a vengeance in New York too, where the Ultimate Beefeater Martini is garnished with a single slice of blue fillet steak.

The competition is now on for the driest martini. There is nothing new in that, of course: Winston Churchill made his by pouring gin into a pitcher and "glancing briefly at the other side of the room. But today's bartenders use vinegar shakers to float two drops on the surface of the driest gin (never Gordons - that is best downed with tonic) so the customer can spread eagle on the bar and have the waiter of her choice administer it in a way of which readers of a respectable newspaper might prefer to remain in ignorance.

Back at The Lanesborough, I settle for a White Lady (gin, Cointreau and fresh lemon juice). Sgr Calabrese is pondering his Floating Voter, an election night special (see recipe, left). "I think it will work - red, blue and yellow. That is sweetness with Labour, the non-alcoholic virginity of the Lib Dems and strength for the Conservatives." I am thinking of an old epigram: One cocktail is just right, two is too many and three is never enough. Was it the same, I wondered, with terms of office?

"It will taste good," Sgr Calabrese pronounces. It may well do on the night. But what about the after-effects? A five-year hangover is a thought to be reckoned with.

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## Your last-ditch guide to election clichés

What kind of an election has this been as far as clichés are concerned?

A bad one. They have come thick and fast.

In what have these clichés come?

In droves.

Are the politicians wholly to blame?

No. The media must also hear.

What must they bear?

The brunt.

The brunt of what?

The blame.

But now the election battle is almost over?

Yes. We are now almost

in sight of that stick

stuck in the ground to

signify the end of the race.

What stick might that be?

The winning post.

But to get to the winning post, what bend-free area do we first have to cover?

The home straight.

After that the winner will be home.

He will.

What else will he be, apart from home?

Dry. Home and dry.

Who does everyone expect to win?

Labour.

Barring what?

A last-minute upset.

What would that be?

A miracle now.

By what geological freak is Labour expected to win?

A landslide.

And if they don't, what will we have on our hands?

A major upset.

And the biggest surprise since who beat who?

Truman beat Dewey.

Good. If Labour do win,

will it be prettily?

No, it will be handsomely.

Will it be a dirty sweep?

A. Clean sweep.

But if Labour don't win,

what then?

Well, I suppose the Tories will win.

No, no, I mean that if the Tories win, it will be a turn-up for something, won't it?

Yes, sorry. Turn-up for the book.

And one in which optical organ?

One in the eye ...

For whom?

For the pundits.

Who will have to eat a folk dish known as ...?

Humble pie?

Good. By whom are these pundits appointed?

By no one. Or rather, by themselves. They are self-appointed pundits.

Exactly. Although the newspapers are their ...

... Their paymasters?

I think so. Have the newspapers themselves declared which party they are in favour of?

Oh, yes. They have all nailed their colours.

To which important part of the boat have they nailed their colours?

The mast.

To what are they flocking?

Mr Blair's standard.

Has John Major given up?

Never. He will not give up until the bitter end. He says that it is all to play for. There are some

things he will never say. Such as?

Die. He will never say die.

But surely even John Major knows that 10 Downing Street will soon have a new something?

Correct. In what internal organ does Mr Major know this?

His heart of hearts.

But he will not give up...

Without a harral royal?

Without a fight to the death?

Yes, yes, we know that. But when will he give up?

Oh, I see. He will not give up until the eleventh hour. Later.

His dying breath?

Not as late as that.

The final whistle?

Excellent. So is it all over?

Yes.

Bar something?

Sorry - bar the shouting.

Thank you.

You're welcome.



Miles  
Kington

150

So far  
Joh  
man

# So farewell then, John Major, man of shadows

We were gathered together in the sight of The Voter for the last time to bid farewell to our Prime Minister - a requiem for his passing. He is not much of a churchgoer, but looking up the relevant words of the *Book of Common Prayer*, I wondered if pausing in the wings for yesterday's press conference he might murmur, "Lord, let me know mine end and the number of my days that I may be certified how long I have to live." Or perhaps, "Deliver me from mine offences and make me not a rebuke unto the foolish."

This was the last of some 120 morning press conferences for all three parties. Here we were at the very end, so might we give us a sign a word, something to move us a little? But no. How like the man in leave us with nothing, no last-minute inspiration, no sudden lifting of his game just as the light fades. No, there was no hint of tragedy at his fall - the birds still sang.

The man has a limitless ability to disappoint. Who knows, perhaps tomorrow when it's all over and far too late, at last he will find words to touch us, words to match the occasion. But probably not, certainly nothing as magnificent as Margaret Thatcher's bot tears of outrage as she left Downing Street for the last time.

History will not be kind to John Major. Our children in 50 years' time will scratch their heads and try to remember who came in the fallow years between Thatcher and Blair. What was his name? What did he do? Yet the remarkable fact remains that this mediocre man, devoid of vision, has indeed held on to power for six long years. Not much loved and much mocked, when he speaks now we see Rory Bremner hinkling.

How did John Major do it? He was a mainstay of the Thatcher years; hardly a poll tax protester, yet when the blame was handed out he wasn't there. When his ministers signed papers to let innocent businessmen go to jail for selling arms to Iraq, he wasn't there either, not him. Honest John was Slippery John. Sleaze? He knew nothing. Unsavory funds for his party? No one told him. Sacrifice Britain's interests abroad for the sake of appeasing the literary right? Of course not. Whip up dangerous Eurosophia in the electorate in the vain hope of victory? That's politics. But it was he who took us into the ERM, and he who fell so ignominiously out of it; he never could dodge that mighty knock-out blow, and his poll ratings never recovered.

No, he wasn't Honest John, or Mr Nice Guy, but he was lucky. And despite his lumbering verbal infelicity, he had the footwork of a mountain goat. Only the deep rift in his party kept him in office, dividing and ruling. Standing with a foot on either side of a widening crevasse is a well-known posture for retaining power - each side hating him a little less than the enemy. But it is neither a dignified nor glo-



Polly Toynbee

Grey, hollow and lacking in vision till the end - history will not be kind to the Prime Minister after his six years in power

rious role for the history books, as Harold Wilson's reputation shows. There will be precious little sentimentalising at his wake.

The past six weeks have been a long deathwatch. The grey man pinned his hopes on making the people love him; instead he has been stripped bare, with the poll hardly nudging since the first day.

Why? Because in the end the cameras do not lie. Night after night we have seen him and his party flounder in the harsh glare of the television lights. And voters have not liked what they have seen: a party riven by a multitude of candidates bribed by a businessman to disobey their leaders and print their own rebellious anti-European manifestos. A leader who could not escape 18 years of blame for everything anyone thinks is wrong with anything. A leader who embraced senile personalism when he endorsed Neil Hamilton. And Labour's well-aimed hammer blows of 22 Tax Rises prevented any last chance of another Double Whammy fight-back. The man never stood a chance.

If the evil that men do lives after them, the charges against Major are legion: the deepening divide between the poor and the rich, the odour of corruption in the air and the humiliation he has inflicted on us by his behaviour.

But lest we infer the shreds of good with his boos, there was one moment in the campaign - only one - when John Major reached for something better, a rare and tantalising glimpse of the leader some of us once thought he could be. It was that day in mid-campaign when at last he faced down his own revolting candidates and put as neat and eloquent a case as anyone has ever made for why we might want to join the single currency. It was an act of bravery, firmness and, a little passion - all the things his leadership has lacked. Now, at this eleventh hour, would the man come into his own? No, it was only the flash of a firecracker, not the kindling of a fire. But it was a sad reminder that in his very first days there was a chance that he might become the great healer of Thatcherite attractions, a good manager, a good European, the classics one-nation leader who now sounds so hollow.

For Labour, the dark years are over. Even now Prince Hal is casting off the shabby and unprincely clothes required for fighting general elections. Early tomorrow morning he will step out in his true guise into a world that is his oyster. He can be anything that he wants to be, and now we wait to see what that is. He travels so light with a majority so great, that he has no excuse for failing.

How easy it should be for him in shine over the bleached bones of this dead regime. How easy to eclipse John Major in an instant, our under-departed leader. "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: blessed is the name of the Lord."

John Major, John or Mr Nice Guy, but he was lucky. And despite his lumbering verbal infelicity, he had the footwork of a mountain goat. Only the deep rift in his party kept him in office, dividing and ruling. Standing with a foot on either side of a widening crevasse is a well-known posture for retaining power - each side hating him a little less than the enemy. But it is neither a dignified nor glo-

An Unofficial Eton College Home Page

The old-school Thai who left US babes lust after a royal Etonian stud-muffin

john walsh

It is surprising to find that Eton College - that citadel of all things modern, go-ahead and cutting-edge - has no web site to call its own on the Internet. It's got a gigantic computer network, sure, and the capacity to e-mail the rest of the world, but no actual database of facts 'n' info about the nation's most famous school. So it must have been quite a shock when one of the computer geeks, surfing listlessly around the globe the other day, discovered the existence of something called "The Unofficial Eton Web Page". Further enquiries revealed a tale of opportunism, lust and transatlantic intrigue. The site had been established, the college discovered, in Los Angeles by a 33-year-old Americanised Thai former male-nurse called Win, who developed an obsession over Eton. After reading *Stand By Your God*, a memoir of life among the boaters, fives courts, wall games and people called "m'tutor", written by the novelist Paul Watkins, Mr Watkins, whose narratives of Hemingway-esque derring-do (*Calm at Sunset Calm at Dawn*, in the *Blue Light of African Dreams*) are currently in the hands of the Hollywood film studios, possesses the kind of reckless good looks that make people swoon over Hugh Grant, and it's possible that the impressionable Win had a slight, manly crush on him. At all events, the site was set up, and the Internet hummed with data, as Old Etonians were grilling for information about their beloved alma mater, for the benefit of gawping Los Angeles. Then Win got through, via e-mail, to a genuine, living, breathing 16-year-old Eton scholar, actually at the college, with whom he proceeded to embellish his web pages.

The first thing to say about Will Self's book launch is that there weren't any primates there. The ovel is called *Great Apes*, the party venue was Regent's Park Zoo, the Monkey House is hardly a banana-throw



beaks discovered the existence of Win's web, but rather than hit the roof, they approved of it. With remarkable phlegm, they even contacted Win to correct a few factual errors. But then they discovered something of which they simply could not approve. Can you guess? It was the Comment page of the web site, where e-mails arrive from all over the world. And an embarrassing number of American ones bore the same message: "I want to shag Prince William". Ever since a picture of the Prince of Wales's elder son had been included on one of the web pages, the female college population of California had gone into a collective frenzy. "How," one girl wrote with a trace of desperation, "can I get into his class?"

It was too much for Eton. They contacted Win. Look here, old boy, they said. Won't do. Bit near the knuckle. Bit infra dig. Can't have gels from the dominos expressin' interest in 13-year-old royalty. Close down that bit, would you, there's a good fellow... And amazingly, the old-school Thai did just that - leaving hordes of lust-crazed American babes frantically contacting any Old Etonians with an e-mail address, asking for news of their hero. It's a print-out of one such communication in front of me. "How can I get in touch with Prince William?" it breathes. "He's such a stud-muffin."

Will Self's book launch is that there weren't any primates there. The ovel is called *Great Apes*, the party venue was Regent's Park Zoo, the Monkey House is hardly a banana-throw

لهم لا يحيط

the commentators

# The who's who of Blair's top team

by Donald Macintyre



servant rather than a politico by trade, and worked in the British Embassy in Washington when he was recruited by Blair. And there is nothing in writing to stop this happening.

Blair's view is that the quality, energy and trustworthiness of the people around him is more important than the machinery itself. Nevertheless, there has been one strong hint of a possible change.

The book *The Blair Revolution*, which Mandelson published last year with Roger Liddle, drew attention first to the need for the Treasury to have a broader role "than merely carving up public expenditure". Which under Brown it will certainly have. It also drew attention to the fact that while No 10 - "a town house rather than a stately home" - could only accommodate a small staff, through the green baize door is the Cabinet Office, which he implied should be more at the disposal of the Prime Minister. "The Cabinet Office should be more akin to the department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet... acting more in future like a policy-making permanent secretary than as a business manager and minute-taker."

Sir Robin Butler - who irritated Blair's office by an overzealous briefing this week on the mechanics of a government handover - is due for retirement as Cabinet Secretary by next year. When he is replaced

- Andrew Turnbull at the Department of Environment is one of several possible candidates - the role of the Cabinet Office could be changed.

Even strong prime ministers find it difficult from time to time to impose their will on government. In his book on the mechanics of a government handover - is due for retirement as Cabinet Secretary by next year. When he is replaced - Andrew Turnbull at the Department of Environment is one of several possible candidates - the role of the Cabinet Office could be changed.

It looks as if the electorate has been utterly unimpressed by complaints about New Labour's lack of government experience. Perhaps, after all, if Blair had been a Labour insider he wouldn't have even attempted what he has succeeded in doing to the party. His will isn't exactly in doubt. Attlee was a long-time member of the wartime political establishment when he became prime minister; Wilson had been a civil servant as well as a Cabinet minister. It may be a more positive advantage than anyone expects for Blair to have been neither.

ably also be confirmed at Trade and Industry. Mo Mowlam is set for Northern Ireland

and won't be a ministerial "chief of staff". He will be a Minister of State - possibly under Cook, or elsewhere. The one certainty is that there will be no ideological bloodbath.

So how does Blair impose himself, and a collective strategy, on a government full of potentially warring ministers fighting turf wars? Semi-insurrection of an inner group drawn from among the Friday appointees would help. There might be areas they would find it difficult to agree; but once they had, it wouldn't be difficult to impose such an agreement on the rest of the Cabinet. Also, giving Blair's mentor, the Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine, chairmanship of key Cabinet committees would ensure that a deeply trusted lieutenant was there to enforce the Prime Minister's will.

But ministers are only part of the story. Expect mafioso

squalls from the Civil Service when Jonathan Powell is confirmed as principal private secretary to the Prime Minister, Ferdinand Mount, who was head of Margaret Thatcher's Policy Unit in the early 1980s, complains that it was an uphill struggle even for her. But Blair hasn't come this far to let his project be disrupted in Whitchurch backbiting.

But private secretaries, unlike press secretaries, have always previously come from inside the Civil Service. (William Clark, Macmillan's press secretary, and Joe Haines, who worked for Harold Wilson, both came from outside the Civil Service.) And this is a key job: Powell will be an unrivalled gatekeeper to the PM. His big brother, Charles, wielded huge influence on Margaret Thatcher's behalf, and he was technically only the No 2. However, the squeals may be quite short-lived. Powell is a civil

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# business & city

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## Formula One flotation plans stalled

Michael Harrison

Bernie Ecclestone has postponed plans to float his Formula One Grand Prix motor racing business in London and New York this summer and has instructed his advisers to examine the alternative of a private sale. There are also doubts about the £2.5m price tag put on the business when the flotation plans first surfaced two months ago. The sale, if it happens, is expected to put a significantly lower value on Formula One.

Mr Ecclestone does not intend to dispose of a controlling stake in the business.

The odds on Formula One being sold this calendar year are now reckoned to be even. Although flotation is still a candidate, the odds are said to be no more than 50:50 on a public offering as opposed to a private sale.

Part of the problem is timing and part of the problem is the fierce resistance to a flotation being encountered among a band of the Grand Prix con-

structors, led by the Williams team.

Mr Ecclestone owns Formula One, which has the television rights to the 16 grand prix held each year and beamed to an audience of 400 million viewers. But the teams point out that Formula One would be nothing without their participation and are said to be pressing for a large slice of the action when Mr Ecclestone cashes up.

Were flotation to remain an option this side of the summer break, then Mr Ecclestone and

his financial advisers, the US investment bank Salomon Brothers, would need to press the button in the next week for there to be time to brief analysts, get research reports written and circulated, publish a prospectus and take Formula One on a roadshow of institutional investors on both sides of the Atlantic.

That means a flotation is now unlikely to take place until the autumn at the earliest. Meanwhile, the option of a trade sale is being given serious

consideration. Large numbers of interested parties, ranging from media companies to wealthy individuals, have expressed an interest in buying a stake in Formula One.

Mr Ecclestone is thought to have repaired the rift with the three teams yet to sign up to the so-called Concorde agreement under which the constructors get a share of the television revenues generated by Formula One. Williams, Benetton and Tyrrell had been refusing to agree terms but Mr Ecclestone

is thought to have offered them more money without disadvantaging the other teams who have signed up.

However, they remain deeply unhappy at the prospect of Mr Ecclestone becoming a billionaire from any flotation.

Constructors are thought to be insisting they should emerge with the bulk of the share after the float.

They are unhappy with the set-up, full stop. They just think the balance is all wrong here. No one is disputing Bernie's con-

tribution to raising Formula One's public image, but that does not give him the right to come away with most of the spoils," said one observer.

Formula One is one of several Ecclestone companies connected with the sport and earns huge, though undisclosed, revenues from the 16 yearly tele-

vised races. These are set to rise dramatically with the advent of digital pay-television.

In Germany, Mr Ecclestone's company has already done a rights deal with the DFL chan-

nel which will enable viewers to select their own camera angle from the cars, using equipment which is manufactured by another Ecclestone company, Formula One Promotions.

The prize, expected to be confirmed later this year, will be a formal pay-per-view alliance with BSkyB.

Mr Ecclestone began to exert his influence on Grand Prix racing in the late 1970s buying the now-defunct Brabham team.

Comment, page 25

## Co-op affair claims Hambros victim

Tom Stevenson  
and Nigel Cope

Peter Large, the Hambros corporate financier at the heart of the failed £1.2bn takeover bid by Andrew Regan for the Co-operative Wholesale Society, has asked to stand down from the bank while his role is investigated by solicitors Norton Rose. A report on the affair, commissioned by Hambros after discussions over the weekend with the Bank of England, is now expected to be pushed through by the end of the month.

Hambros said yesterday it had "agreed to a request from Mr Peter Large to be relieved of his executive responsibilities for the time being to enable him to concentrate upon giving full attention to the inquiry being undertaken by Norton Rose".

The withdrawal of Mr Large, which Hambros denied was a suspension of the banker, was part of the continuing fall-out from the Co-op affair which saw attention turning to the role of Schroders in the attempted takeover and the liquidation of Galileo, the vehicle set up for the bid.

Schroders yesterday admitted that three of its fund managers bought shares worth £11,000 in Lanica Trust on their own personal accounts last November, a month before its own smaller company funds made an investment in Mr Regan's Guernsey-based investment trust. The bank said it was entirely happy that the three had acted properly in their dealings and denied rumours circulating in the City yesterday that it had suspended a fund manager.

Imro, the investment management regulator, would not confirm whether it had started an inquiry into the dealings.

Schroders admitted the dealings in a letter to its institutional investment clients, citing the "considerable amount of press coverage" of the CWS bid, some of which had mentioned Schroders as being an investor in Galileo. The bank said it deplored the use of any "illegal or improper practices", adding it was unhappy its name had been associated with such practices in any way.

It added that: "At no time, either then or subsequently, has Schroders seen any confidential CWS documents." Last week a list of 17 companies, including

**At no time, either then or subsequently, has Schroders seen any confidential CWS documents**

Goldman Sachs, Hambros, Jupiter International, Lloyds Bank Registrars, Nomura, Price Waterhouse, Société Générale, UBS and JP Morgan were named in court as having received leaked documents.

News of the dealings emerged at Galileo, the vehicle set up by Mr Regan, was put into voluntary liquidation by its shareholders, Lanica, Schroders, stockbroker Killik & Co and the fund manager, Jupiter International. According to Jason Eales, a partner of Ernst & Young, the liquidator, Galileo's creditors,

mainly its professional advisers, will be repaid in full the £2m they are owed. There will also be an unspecified return to Galileo's shareholders, who invested £9.6m to cover the due diligence costs of the failed £1.2bn bid. Individual shareholders include David Evans, the Tory MP for Weymouth and Portland. It is thought that the £600,000 invested in Galileo by Lanica Trust will not be returned.

However, the Co-operative Wholesale Society still intends to pursue Galileo for damages. A spokesman said: "The CWS intends to register its interest with Ernst & Young and will be lodging a contingency claim with them as creditors. The Galileo decision to go into insolvent liquidation is not surprising."

A spokesman for Schroders confirmed that one of the fund managers who had dealt on their own account was Andrew Broughton but declined to name the other two. He said they had complied with internal rules regarding share dealings, buying their shares through the firm and then notifying directors of Schroders' Investment Management once it became clear that the funds they managed were likely to make an investment. The acquisition of 115,000 shares in Lanica was approved by an independent group of Schroders' directors.

At Hambros, the Norton Rose investigation is expected to focus on when details of the deal were passed on to Sir Clive Keswick, the chairman of Hambros who wrote to CWS chief executive Graham Melmoth on Monday 21 April defending the bank's relationship with Mr Regan before performing an embarrassing volte-face just one week later.



Jazz theme: President Bill Clinton, a musician noted for other achievements, is reputed to be a user of Boosey saxophone reeds, like the great altoist before him, Charlie Parker

## Boosey stake sale threatens independence

Tom Stevenson  
Financial Editor

Boosey & Hawkes' independence was thrown into doubt yesterday after its largest shareholder, the American Carl Fischer music publishing group, said it had put itself up for sale. Under Takeover Panel rules, any single offer for Fischer, which controls 45.3 per cent of Boosey's share, would trigger a full bid for the British music publisher and instrument maker.

Fischer, which bought into Boosey in 1965 and has seen the value of its investment grow seventeen-fold in the meantime, is understood to have taken the decision to cash in its shareholding following the retirement of Hayden Connor, a family member, as chairman of Boosey. At yesterday's closing share price of 822p, up 30p, Fischer's stake would be worth almost £80m.

Although Fischer has instructed its financial adviser, Credit Suisse First Boston, to maximise proceeds by finding a single buyer for the whole company, including the Boosey holding, it is thought equally likely that it will end up placing the shares with a range of institutional investors.

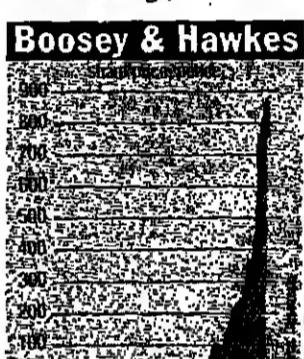
That option, Boosey's preferred outcome, would improve the liquidity of its tightly held shares and maintain its independent stock market listing.

Boosey has been one of the stock market's biggest success stories over the past 10 years, with the value of its shares multiplying eightfold during that period on the back of rapidly growing profits from its instrument-making operations and royalties from its strong

catalogue of serious music composers, including Stravinsky, Bartok and Delius. Its six reeds have been used by such jazz greats as Charlie Parker as well as musicians more renowned for other achievements, such as President Bill Clinton.

As a result of that rapid growth, the company's shares are highly rated, which it is thought might discourage potential buyers for the whole business.

On a forward rating of 24 times earnings, the shares



discount much of the company's growth potential and any bidder may be unwilling to pay another premium for control.

Within instrument manufacturers possible bidders include Yamaha of Japan, which although it is the world leader has tended to concentrate on cheaper instruments than Boosey specialises in, and Steinway. The publishing interests might be attractive to a range of buyers, including EMI.

Last month, Boosey announced a 25 per cent jump in pre-tax profits to £7.7m for the year to December.

## London house prices surpass 1989 peak

Diane Coyle  
Economics Editor

Prices in many areas of central London have passed the peak they set in 1989. Nationwide Building Society said yesterday, House prices nationally rose for the fourth month running in April, with the North-South gap widening further.

Philip Sanderson, head of research, said a shortage of homes coming on to the market was driving prices up. Several buyers were competing for any suitable property.

The election campaign had slightly dampened the level of housing market activity, but the property drought was most to blame for the low level of transactions.

In its latest regional analysis, Nationwide reported that house prices in Greater London had climbed 20.6 per cent in the year to the first quarter and an average of £35,378. This compared with a national average increase of 8.6 per cent, and a decline of 0.5 per cent in Scotland.

Separate official figures showed the number of repossession fell to the lowest level since late 1989 in the first quarter of this year - down 27 per cent, with 14,869 properties repossessed by lenders.

Mr Sanderson said: "As yet there are few signs the rest of the country will see the strong

price gains recently recorded in the South-east." Higher prices would eventually tempt more sellers into the market, but it was difficult to predict when.

The national index increased 0.4 per cent in April with the average house price up to £57,406. This took the year on year change down from 9.7 per cent in March to 8.9 per cent.

The Halifax's house price index, due today, is likely to show a similar April increase, although it is recording a somewhat lower annual inflation rate. Halifax figures have also been showing price rises faster in London than anywhere else.

The report commented that

first-time buyers in London were being forced to move downmarket because of the jump in prices - something that might start to improve the availability of property at the bottom end of the market.

Mortgage lenders are keen to downplay the idea that there is a housing boom. Reacting to Bank of England figures earlier in the week showing a slight dip in new lending in March, the Council of Mortgage Lenders said that proved the housing market recovery was steady rather than booming.

The lenders' argument that the housing recovery is not heading for a boom because it is patchy is unlikely to entirely convince those economists who think it is stoking up inflationary pressure.

The latest figures for national income by region show the West Midlands was the fastest-growing part of the UK during the 1990s.

GDP per capita was highest in Greater London in 1995, at £12,503. It had been thought the tobacco

## BAT urged to speak out over US insurance cover

Magnus Grimond

BAT Industries is facing criticism from one of its institutional shareholders for its failure to comment on a claim that the potentially enormous legal claims resulting from its tobacco activities are substantially covered by insurance.

Neil Woodford of Perpetual, the Henley-based investment group with a £120m investment in the group, yesterday began once more to pick up in New York yesterday.

By midday, the Dow Jones industrial average was up by around 70 points, building on the remarkable 179-point gain achieved on Tuesday.

Investors may be troubled, however, by hints of inflationary dangers in yesterday's GDP growth report. The key price measure showed an advance of 2.7 per cent for the quarter, the strongest rise seen since the first quarter of 1995.

The latest figures for national income by region show the West Midlands was the fastest-growing part of the UK during the 1990s.

GDP per capita was highest in Greater London in 1995, at £12,503. It had been thought the tobacco

companies would have to bear the full cost as calls on general liability insurance policies had been excluded by the wording of the contracts.

But Mr Woodford said there were clear historic precedents from cases involving pollution that attempts by insurance companies to write comprehensive exclusion clauses into policies were not always upheld by the courts.

The perception of the investment community is that there is an enormous black hole in relation to tobacco liabilities. The question I want to know is how much insurance coverage there is in place to cover a hit from product liability claims? I believe [BAT's] general liability insurance coverage probably exists for a variety of tobacco-related claims.

A \$300m (£185bn) 25-year deal to settle claims made by state governments and personal injury litigants has recently been mooted in the US. But it had been thought the tobacco

litigants' presentation of BAT's first-quarter results, fell on deaf ears yesterday. Mr Broughton described the issue as "a highly complex subject, both factually and legally".

Both the types of cases and the issues vary from state to state, involves many different insurers, over many years and with different wording in each.

In typical US fashion, it is certain to require litigation to clarify that and I do not want to prejudice our position by commenting further on that."

The comments came as BAT reported that pre-tax profits just crept ahead to £59m in the first three months of the year, from £59m before. Mr Broughton said the group was still interested in an acquisition to boost its financial services business in the independent financial intermediaries market, but nothing was imminent.

Investment column, page 26

## US growth highest for nine years

Davis Osborne

New York

The US economy grew at an astonishing 5.6 per cent in the first quarter of this year, fuelled mainly by a near-doubling in the rate of spending growth by consumers and a surge in business inventory build-up.

The figures far exceed expectations on Wall Street - something near 4 per cent had been forecast - and represent the highest rate of economic expansion in the US for more than nine years. It also showed

a strong acceleration since the last quarter of last year when growth hit 3.8 per cent.

Job growth is good. Real income is rising. Sentiment is high. Unemployment is the lowest in years. Times are good for American consumers," commented Allen Sinai, economist at Primark Decision Economics.

The data is bound to reinforce fears of overheating of the economy and a return of inflation. It will also strengthen the case that another interest rate rise is inevitable. But after retreating mildly in the

wake of the report's release, both bond prices and equities

began once more to pick up in New York yesterday.

By midday, the Dow Jones industrial average was up by around 70 points, building on the remarkable 179-point gain achieved on Tuesday.

Investors may be troubled, however, by hints of inflationary dangers in yesterday's GDP growth report. The key price measure showed an advance of 2.7 per cent for the quarter, the strongest rise seen since the first quarter of 1995.

The latest figures for national income by region show the West Midlands was the fastest-growing part of the UK during the 1990s.

GDP per capita was highest in Greater London in 1995, at £12,503. It had been thought the tobacco

litigants' presentation of BAT's first-quarter results, fell on deaf ears yesterday. Mr Broughton described the issue as "a highly complex subject, both factually and legally".

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The comments came as BAT reported that pre-tax profits just crept ahead to £59m in the first three months of the

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## COMMENT

'Did he know, as chief executive of Hambrs, that the bid for the Co-op was being constructed on the basis of stolen documents, and if he didn't know, why not?'

## The key questions about Sir Chips and Regan

Can Sir Chips Keswick hope to survive as chief executive of Hambrs or as a director of the Court of the Bank of England? Since the question is being much asked both in and outside the City in the wake of the Andrew Regan fiasco, it seems reasonable to try and answer it. The second part is the easier one to address. Even if the Bank felt minded to get rid of him, it could not do so for the time being unless he is shown to be of 'lunatic or unsound mind', has been 'continuously absent for six months', gone bankrupt or is convicted of an offence. So speaks the 1946 Bank of England Act. Sir Chips may be many things, but lunatic or of unsound mind he is not.

He could, of course, be prevailed upon to resign, but even this seems unlikely, at least until the outcome of the Norton Rose inquiry into Hambrs' role in the affair is known. While there is a theoretical conflict of interest in his position, since the Bank of England is Hambrs' ultimate regulator, this is satisfied by virtue of the fact that the Bank has accepted that the Norton Rose inquiry is for the moment sufficient action.

If the findings of the investigation are adverse, then plainly Sir Chips' position at the Bank of England would be in jeopardy; he would also almost certainly have to go at Hambrs. As always in these affairs, the key questions are: did Sir Chips know, and if he didn't, should he have known? Did he know, as chief executive of Hambrs, that the bid for the Co-op was being constructed

on the basis of stolen documents, and if he didn't know, why not?

We can only presume that the answer to the first question is that he didn't know, for up until the time of his public apology, Sir Chips had repeatedly backed his client and said that everything was above board. The more intriguing question is whether he should have known. Could his apparent failure to get in the bottom of these matters in any way be considered negligent? This is much more difficult territory. It is already clear that this is not an open and shut case, that although Mr Regan and some immediate aides knew where the information came from, others, some of whom received only summaries of what was in the documents, did not.

All these things are matters of fine judgement. Like the rest of us, Norton Rose is not going to find it easy to call. What is certainly true is that Sir Chips acted honourably and quickly once he realised the full extent of what had happened. He deserves some credit for that at least.

What is also certainly true is that even if he emerges reasonably well from the report, he and most of the rest of the Court of the Bank of England, are not going to have their contracts renewed by Labour. All 18 directors of the Court are government appointments. Most of them will find themselves unacceptable in New Labour as they would have been in Old. Why, two of them even signed the business leaders' open letter to

the *Daily Mail* saying Labour couldn't be trusted. As their contracts expire, virtually all the min execs, Sir Chips included, will be cleared out, to be replaced by more Labour-leaning people. In the absence of lunacy or legislation, however, it's going to take some time. Sir Chips' contract doesn't expire until 28 February 2001.

### De Silguy spoke the truth about G3

Rule Britannia Britannia rules the waves! Britons never, never, never shall be excluded from the G7!

As a rallying cry, it leaves a lot to be desired. Yet politicians of all flavours rushed to condemn Yves-Thibault de Silguy when he suggested that the UK will be squeezed out of the inner circle of international economic management after the start of the single currency. John Major accused the EU's monetary affairs commissioner of being 'absurd and arrogant'. Tony Blair said it was just not going to happen.

Coming at the tail of an election campaign awash with symbols of bulldogs and lions, this jingoistic reaction should have come as no surprise. But the two party leaders are both mistaken. Mr de Silguy, although French, was neither arrogant nor wrong. The club of rich industrial nations, a completely informal grouping, will inevitably evolve into a G3 after the start of the single currency.

In fact, there is already an inner cabinet consisting of the US, Japan and Germany. They are the world's three main reserve currencies. When the euro exists, there will be even less need to pay attention to fringe currencies like sterling. It will be more important to include Russia – likely to be formally invited to turn the G7 into a G8 at this summer's summit in Denver, than the UK. Or is that going to be a G4 if Canada, Italy and the UK are to be left out?

Britain's influence will be squeezed from below, too, as a growing number of big, newly industrialised economies such as Korea, China, Brazil and even our former colony, India, take their place on the international stage. These increasingly important economic powers are already playing a bigger role in the International Monetary Fund and the Bank for International Settlements. They are likely to want their own G number.

The veteran City economist Stephen Lewis at London Bond Broking points out that the geometry of international meetings has always been variable. The G7 was a G5 until the Italians made a big enough fuss about having overtaken the British economy in size. In practical terms, he argues, it makes no difference – the politicians discuss what they have to discuss with whoever they want or need to do on the circuit of international meetings. Flag-waving over G7 membership will not by itself give the UK influence in the inner circle. Mr de Silguy may have been unwise to irritate matters yet further in rela-

tions between Britain and Europe, but he speaks the truth and his remarks highlight a key element of the debate over monetary union. If we stay out, we'll be marginalised, not just in Europe, but in the world too.

### Can Ecclestone really own this sport?

Formula One was always going to be a problematic stock market flotation. Its fate raises questions about whether it was ever really possible. What is Formula One and who actually owns it? Bernie Ecclestone is sole owner of the company called Formula One, he organises the events, markets them and sells the TV rights. But he didn't invent the sport, nor does he own it.

Without the teams, or constructors as they are known in the jargon, Formula One would be nothing. They, after all, are the people that stage the crashes. A good number of them said, 'Over my dead body', when they first read that Mr Ecclestone was planning to capitalise on his position through a £2.5bn stock market flotation.

Some problems have been overcome. A new agreement has been hammered out covering division of TV revenue. But this hasn't solved the core issue, which is ownership of the sport itself. Over the years Mr Ecclestone has built himself a very powerful position within the sport. He certainly controls it. But is it really his to sell?

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## GKN deal rules out bid for Vickers

Michael Harrison

GKN, the automotive, industrial services and defence group, yesterday unveiled an agreed £352m takeover of a US supplier of metal parts for the car, home appliance and power tool industries.

The deal is the first big acquisition since CK Chow took over as chief executive from Sir David Lees last year and would appear to dash hopes of GKN making a bid for that engineering group Vickers.

GKN is paying \$570m in cash for Sinter Metals, which is based in Cleveland, Ohio, made up of \$386m for the equity and \$184m for the assumption of debt. The deal will turn GKN into the world's largest supplier of precision pressed powder metal parts with annual sales of £327m.

The acquisition will be funded from GKN's own resources and Mr Chow said he expected it to be earnings-enhancing in the first year.

Sinter Metals is the world's largest independent manufacturer of powder metal parts with

18 production sites in North America and Europe employing more than 3,000 people. The initial market for these kind of parts is put at £2.8bn a year and growing. They are increasingly being substituted for forged steel, cast iron and other metalworking parts because they are cheaper to produce, lighter, stronger and easier to press into complex shapes.

Demand is growing at a rate of 11 per cent a year in the US and 6 per cent in Europe. About 70 per cent of Sinter's output goes into the automotive sector. The rest goes into the white goods, power tool and lawn and garden products industry. Why, two of them even signed the business leaders' open letter to

had probably used up too much of its firepower buying Sinter. GKN had £528m in cash reserves at the end of last year but faces a \$600m settlement in the US after a court ruled in favour of franchisees of GKN exhaust systems which alleged misuse of advertising levies by GKN.

GKN has made a £270m provision in its 1996 accounts to cover the potential cost of the claim and an appeal is under way.

Although analysts generally welcomed the deal there was some caution about it increasing its exposure to a highly cyclical sector such as the car industry when sales were stagnant in mature markets such as the US and Europe, leaving margin under pressure.

"One would have thought GKN may have wanted to diversify its businesses a little and become less cyclical," said one analyst.

Other than car parts, its main businesses are the helicopter maker Westland, the Capet pallet division and industrial services.

News of the deal lifted GKN shares 36p to a close of 949p but Vickers dropped 3p to 212p as analysts concluded that GKN



Big deal: The purchase is GKN's largest acquisition since CK Chow took over as chief executive last year

## BA drops division spin-off project

Michael Harrison

British Airways yesterday scrapped plans to spin off its engineering division and sell a stake in the business to outside investors amid mounting fears that it was pushing the concept of a 'virtual airline' too far.

Bob Ayling, BA's chief executive, said the plan to turn the engineering department into a limited company had been postponed until at least 2000 unless there was a radical restructuring of the industry as a whole.

A spokesman said that while anxieties among the 9,300-strong workforce had been a factor, BA had decided to postpone the plan because market conditions were not right.

However, BA is pressing ahead with a programme to streamline the engineering division. This will involve the sale of its wheels and brakes and landing gear overhaul units to private buyers, the establishment of the parts supply operation as a profit centre, the outsourcing of its information technology functions and a £20m investment in a new pneumatics and hydraulics workshop.

"Achieving these improvements will satisfy our customers and allow us to sub-contract less aircraft engineering services," said Mr Ayling. "This will provide the job security we all want."

"There are no plans at this stage to seek buyers for any other parts of engineering nor to invite outside investors in the overall business."

The aim of the business efficiency programme launched last year by BA is to save £1.6bn from its costs. The plan will involve 5,000 job cuts but BA has pledged to take on a similar number of staff in other areas, mainly customer services.

### IN BRIEF

#### Greenhills earns AIM rebuke

The Alternative Investment Market of the London Stock Exchange said it had decided to censure Greenhills because it "failed to make timely and appropriate announcements or disclosures". AIM said the company's failure to disclose certain information gave "a significantly misleading impression about the company's financial position". It said the losses were related in the opening, development and closing of Thunder Drive, certain agreements and matters disclosed in the company's admission document or which were subsequently announced which were not advanced, and the financial position of the company. It said the company lodged a notice of appeal, but then went into receivership and, eventually, liquidation and the appeal has not been pursued. AIM said it had not censured any of the company's directors and its censure "should not be taken as implying criticism of any director's conduct".

#### French unemployment declines

Unemployment in France fell by 4,800 in March, the second monthly decline in succession. There was a reduction in youth unemployment, more than offsetting increases in joblessness amongst the over-50s and those out of work for more than a year. But the fall was not enough to reduce the jobless rate from its post-war high of 12.8 per cent. With signs of growth in France is picking up, most economists expect further, politically welcome reductions in unemployment later this year without ruling out the possibility of short-term increases.

#### Kvaerner Energy to axe 137 jobs

Kvaerner Energy said it advised trade union officials, management and staff that there will be 137 job losses within its thermal power division at Clydebank in Scotland. Chris Packard, president of Kvaerner Energy, said: "Continuing intense competition in the market-place and a lack of new entrants has forced the company to make this decision. It is hoped that the total number of compulsory redundancies might be reduced by the transfer of some staff to Kvaerner Energy's sister company in Oslo."

#### Wickes nets £7.5m for continental sale

Wickes, the troubled DIY group that was rocked last year by a £50m accounting scandal, has agreed to sell its continental subsidiaries, Wickes BV, Wickes NV and Wickes France SARL to Bricorama, a French company for around £7.5m cash in total. The company said the proceeds, which will be subject to final adjustment based on the audited net assets at completion, will be used to repay bank indebtedness. In addition, Bricorama will be assuming £6.4m of finance leases on the balance sheet of Wickes. After expenses, the transaction is expected to result in a reduction of approximately £12.5m in the consolidated net indebtedness of Wickes. The companies being sold operate 39 do-it-yourself stores in The Netherlands, Belgium and France under the Wickes brand and concept.

#### Aston Villa float raises £12.6m

Aston Villa, the Premier League football club, has raised around £12.5m in its public share offering for its flotation on the stock market. The club said the proceeds, which will be subject to final adjustment based on the audited net assets at completion, will be used to repay £68.780 shares. Applications from full-time employees amounting to 19,620 shares would be allocated in full, as would requests from season ticket-holders for up to 200 shares.

## Hiscox moves to oust individual names

Terry Macalister

Another leading figure at Lloyd's of London has applied to the insurance market's ruling council for permission to remove individual directors from his syndicates.

The move by Robert Hiscox, former deputy chairman of Lloyd's, comes just on the heels of a similar push to remove names by John Charman, chairman of LNAWP, said: "Mr Hiscox said names were sheep to be sheared. Now he seems intent on giving them their final haircut."

Representatives of names are angry about the move by

Mr Hiscox played down the significance of his application, saying no decision had been made on whether to buy out the names. He wanted approval from the Lloyd's council so his managed syndicates, which are in the throes of being merged, could proceed quickly should a buyout be decided.

"We do not want to be handcuffed. At the moment we have no such [buyout] intentions, but we do not rule it out in future," said Mr Hiscox, who looks after the affairs of syndicates 33, 625 and 52.

He said he was in two minds as to the advantages and disadvantages of names versus corporate capital. There were savings to be made if the names' system of annual ventures was abolished and it would be much easier to have one major shareholder rather than hundreds of small ones, he believed.

But, Mr Hiscox said: "Ultimately we feel even-handed about this. We could run our business more cheaply [without names] but then we would be putting an awful lot of [our] money at risk."

Mr Hiscox said that in his former capacity as deputy chairman he had introduced a range of policies that greatly benefited individual investors: "It was the value group which I chaired which introduced security of tenure for names and pre-emption rights, which led to the success of Lloyd's capacity."

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The warning came from David Varney, chief executive of the renamed BG, at the company's annual shareholders meeting in Birmingham. The company was referred to the MMC last October after it refused to accept price controls proposed by the industry regulator, Clark Spottiswoode of Ofgas, claiming they could result in 10,000 job losses and a £400m cut in annual cash flow.

The MMC is due to report by the end of next month, meaning the decision on the future of the business will almost certainly be taken by a Labour government.

Mr Varney told shareholders: "It is essential for this MMC inquiry to provide TransCo with long-term regulatory clarity and stability, which is vital for the successful implementation of full domestic competition by the end of 1998."

## Banks attack 'Which' report

John Wilcock

by Nationwide and Bradford & Bingley, could be further squeezed by hostile takeovers.

Although technically difficult to implement, Abbey National managed to buy National & Provincial Building Society 18 months ago against the initial opposition of the target's board.

'Which?' says: "Many people are celebrating windfalls from building society conversions but consumers could end up paying dearly for their short-term financial gain."

The Consumers' Association says the societies which were preparing to convert were already charging more for mortgages than those determined to stay mutual: "Consumers with Nationwide would have paid £220 less interest on a £60,000 loan than with Alliance & Leicester over 12 months, £228 less than with Woolwich and £210 less than with Halifax."

The BBA fired back: "Whatever the fate of the mutuals, competition among other providers will sustain consumer choice. The report's interest rate comparisons are a relatively crude measure of performance for customers, covering a narrow period and a narrow product range."

The Consumers' Association is alarmed by the conversions of the Halifax, Woolwich, Alliance & Leicester and Northern Rock building societies this year. It also warns that the ever-shrinking mutual sector, headed

## Market at risk, warns BG

SIR BRIAN SHAW

D.J. JEFFERY

G.P. ELLIS

Chairman Chief Executive Chief Financial Officer

Published by the Port of London Authority under Section 8(3) of the Port of London Act 1968

The above is an extract from the published Accounts of the Port of London Authority for the year ended 31 December 1996 which have been delivered to The Secretary of State for Transport

G.E. Ennals, Secretary

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## business

# Murdoch digital consortium could be worth £1.5bn

Michael Harrison

British Digital Broadcasting, the consortium formed by BSkyB, Granada and Carlton to bid for the licence to broadcast digital terrestrial television, could be worth up to £1.5bn, according to a research report published today.

The report, by brokers Henderson Crosthwaite, says that the lion's share of the spoils over the 12-year period of the concession will go to Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB if the consortium wins the right to begin broadcasting the 50-channel service next year.

Although each of the partners in BDB has the same 33 per cent stake, the report estimates that the three licences on offer would add £1.1bn to the value of BSkyB against only £250m for Granada and £1.78m for Carlton. This equates to 64p a share

for BSkyB, 27p for Granada and 31p for Carlton.

The rival bidder for the licences is Digital Television Network, a subsidiary of the US cable operator International CableTel, Britain's third biggest cable television company. The report values DTN at £600m.

The three licences or "multiplexes" as they are known, will carry 30 channels. Half will be existing free BBC, ITV and Channel 4 channels and half will be pay channels. The Independent Television Commission is due to award the licences in late May or early June and the new service is expected to start in the middle of next year. The set-top boxes needed to receive digital television are initially expected to cost £300-£500 although this could eventually fall to £200.

Mathew Hursman, media analyst at Henderson Crosthwaite and the author of the report, said

that although BSkyB's dominant position in BDB constituted a risk to competition, this was outweighed by the need to select a consortium that would make a success of the new medium.

"Digital terrestrial broadcasting, offering just 30 channels, will face competition from digital satellite and digital cable (200 channels). Therefore it must have well-financed backers with proven programming if it is to succeed. BDB is more likely to ensure its success than the rival Digital Television Network."

It is open to the ITC to split the award between the two bidders, although Henderson Crosthwaite thinks this is unlikely because of the financial risks of having two competing operators providing just 30 channels.

"Based on our comparison of the two bids, we believe the best outcome for the development of DTT will be an all-out win for British Digital Broadcasting," Mr Hursman added.

The report forecasts that both bidders would break even in 2004 when their funding requirement peaks at £360m for BDB and £730m for DTN. It forecasts that the number of subscribers will rise from just under 600,000 in 1999, the first full year of operation, to nearly 3.4 million in 2009, the last year of the concession.

BDB would make a £95m loss on revenues of £1.03m in 1999, turning into a profit of £78m on turnover of £973m in 2009. DTN is forecast to make a much bigger loss of £23m in year one but a profit of £430m in the last year on revenues of £1.2bn.

Such things are occupational hazards for BAT and there were plenty of signs yesterday that the underlying business remains as strong as ever. Tobacco profits up from £35m to £63m would have shown a decent 8 per cent rise but for a £2m hit taken for the future closure of a factory in Berlin.

The only fly in the ointment was signs that competition has hotbed in the US, with Philip Morris increasing the size and duration of discounts offered to retailers. BAT's US operation, Brown & Williamson, saw its market share slip, but most of the decline was due to the loss of brands it was forced to sell by regulators in the wake of the takeover of American Tobacco.

Financial services, principally encompassing the Farmers insurance group in the US, Eagle Star and Allied Dunbar, were unexciting. The key to BAT remains a settlement of the in-terminable US litigation, which is now set to spread to the UK. Tobacco share prices soared when the \$300bn figure first surfaced last month, indicating the prize waiting to be grasped. Although \$300bn is clearly a big sum, it is only equivalent to around 60 cents on a typical packet of US cigarettes.

Barclays de Zoete Wedd believes that BAT without the legal threat could be worth at least 70p more on today's price.

Commenting on the figures, John Brotz, managing director of Cadbury Schweppes' beverages division, said: "Overall, our plus 1 per cent volume growth performance in US soft drinks is better than in the same period last year and we are encouraged by these results."

Cadbury is ranked third in the US soft drinks market behind Coca Cola and Pepsi. The figures followed an 8 per cent rise in earnings from Persico, whose figures were announced on Tuesday. The rise was led by strong sales of US drinks. Case sales grew by 6 per cent, boosted by double digit growth from Mountain Dew and solid growth from Pepsi.

Cadbury Schweppes shares slid back 10p to 515.5p on the quarterly figures. One analyst said: "The Dr Pepper figures weren't good enough after the Pepsi report on Tuesday."

The Americas account for 60 per cent of Cadbury's soft drinks sales and 30 per cent of group turnover.

In March John Sunderland, the new Cadbury Schweppes chief executive, announced a 16 per cent increase in full year profits to £592m. The company then said that it could afford a £1bn-£2bn acquisition following the £63m sale of its stake in Coca Cola Schweppes Beverages.

Cadbury increased its advertising spend from £88m to £738m last year with a large amount of the increase put behind the Seven Up brand.

The company said that Seven Up sales were affected by the delisting of the drink by certain Coca Cola and Pepsi bottlers. Another factor has been aggressive marketing of rival brand Sprite by Coca Cola.

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## business

# Yes we are better off now, but there's been a price to pay



Diane Coyle

The Tories have  
embraced  
change. But they  
have not  
admitted that  
there are costs,  
including blatant  
unfairness

Whatever the result of the election, one of the puzzles for Conservative strategists to mull over will be why the economy was not more of a vote-winner. What did happen to the feel-good factor? Why did the deliberate echo of the slogan "You've never had it so good" not chime with the mood of the electorate when we have indeed never been better off? Why did studio audiences jeer Michael Heseltine and Kenneth Clarke when they tried to say so?

There are two types of answer to these questions, both instructive for whoever finds themselves running the economy from tomorrow. One is that voters have not been ready to give the ex-Government the credit for setting right its own mistakes. The Clarke successes of the past four years have not erased the memory of the Lamont failures of the previous three.

The inflation target, the Ken and Eddie show, the tax cuts in the two most recent Budgets have delivered a perfectly reasonable business cycle performance, subject to the criticism that Mr Clarke has primed the pump a bit too much ahead of the election. But nobody has forgotten the deep recession – one of the worst in the industrial world since the Second World War – the humiliating exit from the Exchange Rate Mechanism in 1992, the sharp fall in borrowing and the tax hikes after the last election.

What's more, the economic policies of the past five years will not turn out to be the monuments of 18 years of Conservative government, if that era does end today. Looking back over the years to 1979, the most significant policies were all implemented in the first decade, not the second. If I had to single out one decision that had made a lasting and profound difference to Britain's economic prospects, it would be the privatisation of BT and deregulation of telecommunications.

This has put the UK alongside the US in the vanguard of new technology and growth prospects, and given us a better communications infrastructure and more vigorous multimedia industry than most other industrial nations. But other

Thatcherite acts of deregulation and privatisation also made a contribution to halting Britain's relative economic decline.

Professor Nick Crafts, no Thatcherite, concluded in a recent pamphlet for the Social Market Foundation that the UK had probably stopped sliding down the world league. Recent Labour claims to the contrary exaggerate small changes in the UK's position due mainly to exchange rate changes.

Yet the Thatcher shake-up of the

British economy also explains the second kind of reason why the Tories are now getting no credit for prosperity. For it created winners and losers in a way that conventional macroeconomic policy rarely does. Although inflation certainly penalises some groups – savers, people on fixed incomes, the low paid whose earnings never keep up – this is an invisible and undramatic redistribution. Labour market deregulation, the attempts to reshape public services, pension reform, privatisation, on the other hand, have dramatically increased inequality in the UK.

In a world where the embodiment of a big wave of technological change is turning industrial structure upside down, making old skills obsolete and destroying and creating markets, greater inequality is probably inevitable. Politicians have to choose whether they will embrace change and try to take advantage of it or resist it. The Conservatives have embraced it. But they have not admitted that there are costs, including blatant unfairness.

Inequality makes us all worse off, even the winners. The poorest group in the population are without any question materially better off than they were two decades ago. But crime and social dislocation have increased. The strain on the welfare state has become intolerable, and the resulting squeeze on spending has left us in the state of private affluence and public squalor identified by John Kenneth Galbraith.

This means that accountability of the economic performance of the past 18 years is more complicated

than just looking at the higher level of national income per head the Tories can point to. Thus the New Economics Foundation's index of sustainable economic welfare adjusts GDP for costs such as inequality, the depletion of natural resources, environmental degradation and "defensive" spending such as crime prevention. It has fallen by 17 per cent in per capita terms since 1979.

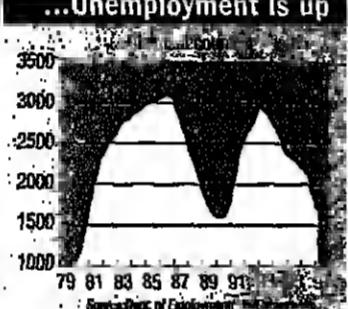
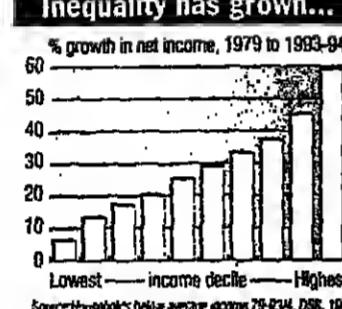
The lesson of this calculus for the next 18 years is that the sorts of economic developments that are monitored day to day by officials and the City and the newspapers do not reveal the big changes that are taking place in the economy. Of course it is important to keep inflation low and growth steady. But it is other policies that will make the biggest difference to our prosperity by 2015. So, despite the risks in futurology, here is one scenario for 21st Century Britain.

The pound will have been replaced by the euro, but local, electronic currencies will have developed in parallel in the big urban areas. We will be adept at paying in one when we cross through the tunnel or do our online shopping from the national store chains, and at paying in another for local services. But the tax authorities will have failed to keep up, so the government will face a serious revenue shortfall.

Some public services will have been all but privatised. In pensions and long-term care, in housing, and in some areas of health care, the state will pay for the bare minimum and we will top up privately. Public resources will be concentrated on insuring us against the truly unpredictable financial events like illness and mid-life unemployment.

Britain will be booming and will have started to move up the international economic league tables. It will be a world leader in rapidly growing information-related industries using new technologies. Just as Harold Wilson was able to enjoy the benefits of the white heat of technological revolution for a few years in the Sixties, whoever is prime minister in the first decade of the 21st Century will reap the benefits of the latest technological wave.

Inequality has grown...  
...Unemployment is up



# The political leaders who speak with silver tongues

## PEOPLE & BUSINESS



Edwina Currie has won a "Foot in Mouth" award for her prediction of a landslide Labour victory just days before the election and the Labour leader, Tony Blair, has walked the "Silver Tongue" competition with his "assured handling of Labour's election campaign", according to Aziz Corporation, a Winchester-based presentation consultancy.

The awards were made to mark the best and worst performances by politicians during the campaign. Peter Ruff of Aziz Corporation said Edwina broke all the rules he teaches in handling media interviews. "She fell into the trap of speaking off the record, making comments which no journalist could ignore. She compounded her errors as she subsequently tried to excuse herself."

Paddy Ashdown came second in the silver tongue stakes while, perhaps surprisingly, Michael Portillo came third "for maintaining the Cabinet position on Europe despite all attempts to derail him".

John Prescott was a close runner-up for the foot in mouth prize for his gaffes on the minimum wage. And Eurosceptic-in-chief Sir James Goldsmith got a special Aziz raspberry for ignoring all the rules of election broadcasts developed over the past 30 years. His cardinal sin was "delivering a lecture to viewers from behind his desk". He's obviously been in business too long.

Morgan Stanley is one. BZW would love to be one and Singer & Friedlander is quite happy in the knowledge that it will never be one – a bulge bracket investment bank.

But what is a bulge bracket when it's at home? We all know that BZW and NatWest Markets are throwing money at fancy hirings in order to compete with the global big boys such as Goldman Sachs. But while banks like these aspire to "bulge bracket" status nobody seems to know exactly what the term means.

I turned to a recent copy of *Investment Investor* magazine for the answer. Apparently the original "bulge bracket" club originated on Wall Street and ceased to exist at least 10 years ago. The term covered a half-dozen American houses which ran a near-cartel of underwriting bond issues.

In the 1940s and 1950s banks such as Morgan Stanley, First Boston, Kuhn, Loeb & Co and Dillon, Read gathered together to carve up such issues between them leaving lesser banks to pick up the less lucrative bits.

This cartel disintegrated in the 1970s, hit by competition from aggressive houses such as Salomon and Merrill Lynch. But the description lives on as a coveted badge of banking machismo.

So now you can stun investment bankers with your knowledge. And there I was thinking it described the size of their wallets.

City University Business School has a new dean, industrial economics guru Professor Leslie Hannan. He succeeds David Kaye, himself a former senior partner with Andersen Consulting.

Professor Hannan has a positively overflowing CV, having taught at Oxford, Cambridge, the Harvard Business School and Hitotsubashi University, Tokyo. He is pro-director of the London School of Economics and will take up his new post in September.

Professor Hannan thinks there is "still everything to play for" in the expanding European market for business education, as opposed to the US, where the market is already mature.

He thinks there are around a dozen main contenders, City among them.

A London businessman is being held in Antwerp by police investigating a £100m fraud which hit Lloyd's syndicates and top brokers in the City of London.

Mike Reeve, chairman of CRM Insurance Services, was detained by Belgian judicial police while attempting to board over a 300-page dossier designed to distance himself from the affair, his company said last night.

CRM acted as a managing agent for Dai Ichi Kyo, the Brussels-based insurance company at the centre of an international investigation by the Belgian police, the FBI and the Serious Fraud Office. The company traded on the similarity of its name to Japan's largest bank and took huge amounts of money from City brokers on the strength of its alleged backing from Japanese pension funds.

Mr Reeve went to Belgium to clear his name and instead got thrown into the clink. Last night CRM denounced this conduct as "quite outrageous, reflecting the manner in which this entire inquiry has been coercively misdirected". The Belgian police kept silent.

John Willcock

### Foreign Exchange Rates

Sterling	Dollar			D-Mark
	Spot	1 month	3 months	
US	162.65	86.6	87.15	1000
Canada	2.2679	61.56	70.15	139.71
Germany	2.8095	87.83	97.195	1.3757
France	1.2275	22.25	23.67	1.0001
Italy	1.7771	22.42	21.04	1.7715
Japan	205.22	93.95	95.20	132.91
ECU	1.4393	22.20	22.66	1.2777
Netherlands	5.0725	4.435	4.435	5.0725
Denmark	2.0595	25.00	27.00	1.9281
Netherlands	3.610	85.77	70.00	1.2520
Ireland	1.0903	5.1	5.15	1.0923
Norway	2.2028	22.19	22.19	1.0401
Sweden	12.730	22.00	21.50	14.6521
Switzerland	2.3908	93.54	97.20	14.7254
Australia	2.0767	67.45	68.45	70.76
New Zealand	4.0277	72.95	74.00	74.50
Singapore	6.0856	0.0	0.0	3.7050
Malta	2.3463	0.0	0.0	1.0463

### Other Spot Rates

Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	1.8227	0.9093	Nigeria	138.42	83.3000
Australia	1.0225	12.00	India	1.0225	12.00
Brazil	1.7284	10.637	Pakistan	65.244	1.0225
China	1.3420	8.2435	Philippines	42.8510	26.3900
Egypt	5.5655	3.4009	Portugal	281.93	73.745
Greece	3.7174	1.0225	Russia	635.73	3.8520
Greece	3.7174	1.0225	Russia	635.73	3.8520
India	5.8016	35.7500	South Africa	12.791	4.4840
Ireland	0.4936	1.0225	Taiwan	44.9546	27.6200

Forward rates quoted high to low at a discount: subtract from spot rate  
Rate quoted low to high are at a premium:  
"Dollar rates quoted as reciprocals.  
For the latest foreign exchange rates call 0891 123 3033.  
Calls cost 50p per minute

### Interest Rates

#### Bond Yields

Country	5 yr	7 yr	10 yr	yield %	Country	5 yr	7 yr	10 yr	yield %
UK	7.0%	7.4%	7.45%	7.45%	Netherlands	5.7%	5.7%	5.7%	5.7%
France	6.0%	6.5%	6.5%	6.5%	Spain	8.75%	8.75%	8.75%	8.75%
Germany	6.0%	6.5%	6.5%	6.5%	Belgium	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%
Italy	6.0%	6.5%	6.5%	6.5%	Japan	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%
Denmark	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%	Austria	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%
Netherlands	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%	Portugal	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%
Advances	2.70%	3.25%	3.25%	3.25%	Switzerland	100%	100%	100%	100%

#### Money Market Rates

Country	OTC	7 Day	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year
Intabank	5	5	5	5	5	5
Sterling CD	5	5	5	5	5	5
Local Authority Dept	5	5	5			

# Orchestra sets his stall out

## Racing

RICHARD EDMONDSON  
reports from Ascot

Double Trigger, the leading force among stayers for some time now, went into yesterday's Sagaro Stakes with nine Group victories to his name. Like another who has held top office for a while, he has found No 10 an elusive target yesterday.

The chestnut's efforts to record a hat-trick in the Group Three race faltered dramatically as he limped home last behind Orchestra Stall.

Orchestra Stall was second and Election Day, who at one stage looked as though he might finish on the date his name suggested, struggled back up into third.

Orchestra Stall has suffered

for much of his career because of an apprehension (drawn from his breeding) that he would perform best on spongy going. He disappointed on such a surface on his reappearance, but looked a different performer yesterday. "We didn't like the idea of running on this ground," Lord Swathling, the gelding's part-owner, said. "But obviously the horse did. Now we'll have to put him in all the decent staying races."

There is a slight problem there. The entries for the Ascot Gold Cup closed yesterday and Orchestra Stall's name was not among them. Nevertheless, there will be other prizes for the five-year-old, even if none of them come in beauty contests. He was by no means the best. Jason Weaver had to get up the latter was considered atrocious

lest, blasting out snorts that would have extinguished a brazier. Wilawander took the eye with his caramel coat, but Double Trigger, who looks as though he has been the victim of a whitewash attack, was again the magnet. It remains a sur-

RICHARD EDMONDSON  
NAP: Brambles Way  
(Redcar 3.30)  
NB: Ziggy's Dancer  
(Wolverhampton 3.45)

prise his rider comes out wearing a helmet and not a stetson.

The favourite was reported by connections to be "full of beans", but from half-way he moved as if there was also chips, Yorkshire pudding and semolina down there as well. Jason Weaver had to get up the latter was considered atrocious

Jiyush was certainly the nois-

"Three and a half out I thought we still had a chance," the jockey said. "I was pushing and pumping from Swinley Bonom but I was like that last year so I wasn't that worried. But then he was gone. Obviously I'm disappointed but he'll be back."

There was no easy explanation from the horse's trainer either. "I told Jason that if they were going too fast to let him come in his own time, but he didn't come," Mark Johnston said. "It may be that he doesn't try when he isn't in front. Jason said that he didn't make much effort and we ought to try him in blinkers but then that was his opinion this time last year."

Orchestra Stall's victory doubled a double for Richard Quinn, successful later in the Victoria Cup on Tregaron. The latter was considered atrocious

handicapped by Reg Akhurst, but the trainer usually says that before he wins this race. He has collected it twice before with Sky Cloud and Far North.

Akhurst's horses returned from action for part of last season as if they required an inhaler and the trainer put this down to fumes of oilseed rape near the Epsom gallops. "It's detrimental to people who have got asthma and I'm sure it's detrimental to horses," he said.

The pollen is rich and oily and we had a lot of lung infections.

"The farmer had already planted it again for this year but he's a terrific chap because he's sprayed it and killed the lot. I owe him a debt of gratitude." Point taken. If you ever see Bert Perry in a betting shop having a punt on a South Hatch runner, match his bet.

## Dazzle may yet shine again when it matters most

Ian Davies canvasses the views of Timeform's clock guru on the Classics

Election day - time for some Wright thinking. Not about who governs Britain, but who will be the "gov'nors" of the Rowley Mile after the 2,000 and 1,000 Guineas this weekend. This year's Guineas trials have been less than conclusive and Chris Wright, who compiles *Timeform's* much-respected timetables, admits this year's search for that winning ante-post Classic bet is harder than ever.

Wright says: "Entrepreneur is impossible to assess. He cannot be faulted in terms of hav-

ing done everything asked of him so far but his timefigures in his three races as a two-year-old of 52, 88 and 71 are meaningless in terms of assessing his chances of a Classic, where the winner is expected to return a figure of at least 120."

"Yalainance and Revoque returned reasonable figures of 110 each when separated by just a head in the Greenham Stakes. They make more appeal than Desert Story, an exposed colt who returned a figure of 109 when winning the Craven

Stakes. That's a fair figure, but they finished in a heap and you have thought that farm was not good enough for a Classic."

Hidden Meadow recorded a figure of 103 when winning the Free Handicap and needs to improve this year, I'm inclined to go back to last year's figures and Dazzle's 118 when winning the Cherry Hinton Stakes at Newmarket over six furlongs in July. Admittedly she disappointed in her subsequent starts in the autumn and there

is an argument for saying she has failed to train on and that figure has little relevance for a Classic over a mile.

However, the Cherry Hinton farm looked solid at the time - Ocean Ridge, the runner up, subsequently won the Prix Robert Papin and Dazzle's 114-1 for the 1,000 with Coral and Ladbrokes) reminds me of a bit of Kerner.

She was ultimately disappointing as a two-year-old in 1988, having clocked a fast figure of 109 when winning the Craven

winning the Nell Gwyn Stakes while Dance Parade clocked just 78 in the Fred Darling Stakes. So, with nothing having impressed this year, I'm inclined to go back to last year's figures and Dazzle's 118 when winning the Cherry Hinton Stakes at Newmarket over six furlongs in July. Admittedly she disappointed in her subsequent starts in the autumn and there

is an argument for saying she has failed to train on and that figure has little relevance for a Classic over a mile.

Looking further ahead to

the Derby, although the key trials have yet to be run, this year's Wright likes Fabris, winner of the Feilden Stakes. Wright says: "Fabris has been kept from the track by a parasitic disease which affects the nervous system called EPM. Someone may be suffering from a similarly debilitating affliction tonight known as ex-PM."



Akhurst: Trains Tregaron

There was a blast from the past in the Chobham Stakes when Nwanmis, who was fifth in the 1995 2,000 Guineas, finally found his way back to the winners' enclosure at the age of five. The old horse has been kept from the track by a parasitic disease which affects the nervous system called EPM. Someone may be suffering from a similarly debilitating affliction tonight known as ex-PM.

Such strings have caused problems in the past. Llanelli, up to their eyeballs in debt, recently passed up the opportunity of a £200,000 loan from the WRU because they objected to restrictive clauses in the agreement. But the signs are that full agreement between the clubs and the governing body will be reached before the end of the current campaign.

Happy news at Bath, 100,

## Windfall for top Welsh clubs

### Rugby Union

CHRIS HEWITT

Next year's Welsh champions will rake in well in excess of £500,000 in prize-money under new financial arrangements announced in Cardiff yesterday.

Broadcasting and sponsorship revenue will allow the Welsh Rugby Union to put a £3.5m pot on the premiership table, enough to ensure all eight participating clubs at least £367,000, just for turning up.

As a result, the big guns of the Principality can look forward to competing on a level playing field with the Leicesters, Baths, Wasps and Harlequins of this world. Although previously impoverished sides like Neath will look on this latest cash injection with an ironic eye - had the reigning champions picked up half a million for winning last season's title, they would almost certainly have kept Leigh Davies and the Llewellyn brothers at The Gnoll - they are now secure in the knowledge that the wolf has moved further away from the door than at any point since the onset of professionalism.

## Saints wait on Hunte

### Rugby League

DAVE HADFIELD

St Helens and Bradford have both delayed naming their teams for the Challenge Cup final - but the problems they face in making their decisions are different.

"I've already had sleepless nights about it," Elliott said.

Saints' coach, Shaun McRae, is still waiting for Alan Hunte, the in-form centre whose hamstring injury could keep him out of the Wembley line-up, to prove his fitness in time to play.

With Swansea ruling out any prospect of Scott Gibbs returning to make a guest appearance in the final, McRae will have to choose between Andy Hulgh and Vila Mataula to fill Hunte's place if he fails to recover in time.

Saints' other recent casualty, Derek McVey, is back in training after ankle ligament trouble, but McVey must decide whether he can risk a forward who has not played since Good Friday.

Leeds and Sheffield Eagles have both made inquires for David Bradbury, the Great Britain tour loose forward who has been transfer-listed at £200,000 by Oldham.

There is, however, no such thing as a free lunch - or, in rugby's case, a free pint. Fearful that clubs might spend most, if not all, of the cash on six-figure salaries, the WRU is laying down a number of conditions designed to ensure at least some investment in player development and will reserve the right to examine the books of all participants.

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Happy news at Bath, 100, where Gareth Adams, the England A hooker forced to retire from all contact sport at 36 because of neck problems, has been appointed director of youth development. Adams will be expected to strengthen ties with the club's high-profile rugby academies at Colston's School in Bristol and Bath University.

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The Cup's sponsors, Salford, are again putting up a £10,000 prize for any player who scores a hat-trick of tries in the final on Saturday.

Bradford's Robbie Paul collected such a cheque when he became the first player to do so in a Wembley final, captaining the Bulls to their 40-32 defeat by Saints last year. He still could become Wembley's youngest-ever winning captain if he lifts the Cup this weekend.

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## Wright debut as England go for youth

### Hockey

BILL COLWILL

Lucilla Wright, Olton's 17-year-old striker, is set to make her international debut against the United States in England's opening match of the Five Nations' Invitation Tournament which starts today in Vancouver.

Olton's inclusion in a squad containing five teenagers demonstrates the commitment to youth of the coach, Maggie Souvane, and her emphasis on attacking hockey.

"We must have the confidence to play a more attacking style, exhibiting full fitness of skill," Souvane said.

Experience will be provided by the captain, Mandy Davies, and the 34-year-old Karen Brown, who will be winning her 25th outdoor cap out of 285 international appearances.

Brown is one of five players from the Great Britain squad who went to the Olympics in Atlanta. She was fourth in the women's tournament, won a silver medal in the 100m and was part of the British team that won the bronze medal in the 4x100m relay.

Olton's first international appearance came in 1994, when she was 13. She has been selected for the 1995 2,000 Guineas, and has won 100 caps for England.

Lucilla's mother, Debbie, has been a regular in the England team for 10 years, and her dad, Steve, has been a coach for 15 years.

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## sport

'We seek your help to smash a system under which, now in this year of 1955, human beings are being bought and sold like cattle'

In the unlikely event that Vinnie Jones could be persuaded to look back beyond his last childish prank and explore the history of industrial relations in English football be would come across Jimmy Guthrie.

Guthrie, who led Portsmouth to a famous 4-1 victory over Wolverhampton Wanderers in the 1939 FA Cup final, achieved greater prominence as a troublemaker, leading a struggle for the pay and conditions enjoyed today in English football even by players of Jones's limited ability.

What I am coming to quickly is the consternation Jones has caused by threatening to challenge legally the transfer fee system that applies if players want to move between

English clubs at the end of their contracts.

As it is a system supported by the Professional Footballers' Association, who shared concern expressed generally over the controversial Bosman ruling that allows players to move freely to other countries, you have to wonder if there are people other than Jones involved in the issue. In other words, who put him up to it?

In fact, total freedom of contract was exactly what Guthrie sought 42 years ago when addressing the Trades Union Congress. "I stand here," he said, "as the representative of the last bonded men in Britain — the professional footballers. We seek your help to smash

a system under which, now in this year of 1955, human beings are being bought and sold like cattle. A system which, as in feudal times, binds a man to one master or, if he rebels, stops him getting another job. The conditions of the professional footballer's employment are akin to slavery ['Slaves in Chains' was the headline placed above reports of Guthrie's oration].

Guthrie went on: "They snitch the name of British democracy. I have been accused by the football bosses and in the press of exaggeration in talking about 'slavery'. Let the bitter facts speak for themselves."

They were that a professional footballer's contract ended on 30 June each year when he was either



KEN JONES

retained for a further 12 months, placed on the open-to-transfer list or given a free transfer. A retained player who did not agree terms received no money and could not move elsewhere. Similarly, a play-

er on the open-to-transfer list was no longer on the payroll and could not move until a fee was paid for his services.

Considering that it was six years before things began to change we have come a long way in a relatively short time. In 1960, when on tour with the England Under-23 team, George Eastham told me that he was determined to get away from Newcastle United even if it meant going on strike. There was no great cause in Eastham's mind but the stubbornness that brought about his transfer to Arsenal inspired a well-organised campaign, led brilliantly by Jimmy Hill, that put paid to the maximum wage and the retain and transfer system.

Nevertheless allowing clubs to put a price (subject to arbitration) on selected players who were out of contract made sense. It still does, protecting most obviously the smaller clubs and, therefore, the unique structure of English league football.

This week,

in an interview he gave to the *Sun*, the PFA's chief executive, Gordon Taylor, expressed fears that would never have occurred to a man of Guthrie's militant nature. "The system is not out of date because it works," Taylor said. "Of course we will refine it because of Bosman. But don't tear up everything and start again. There is security for players in this country. They cannot be sacked. Contracts have to be honoured... We do not

want freedom across the board because my members realise it would affect the clubs they came from and often go back to."

When I was a member of Taylor's union and a delegate to its annual conference, I felt the need for radical change as much as anyone. Later on newspapers provided me with an opportunity to campaign for improvements in the working conditions of professional footballers.

Jones should count himself lucky. There was a time, I think, when he would have been advised to seek alternative employment. Stick to luggage, cement, raising chickens. Foolishly, he is now threatening the very system that made his overblown status possible.

## Universities upset slipshod Sussex

### Cricket

**DEREK PRINGLE**  
reports from Fenner's  
British Universities 217-6  
Sussex 198  
British Univ win by 19 runs

First it was Ireland, yesterday it was the turn of British Universities to upset the cosy status quo of county cricket by beating Sussex in the current round of Benson and Hedges matches. English cricket is not strong, but if the giant-killing trend continues at this rate, England may even have a chance of trouncing the Aussies, though it is un-

likely that Michael Atherton can rely on them playing quite as poorly as Sussex did at Fenner's.

This was the students' first win in this competition for seven years and they last beat Yorkshire at Headington in 1990. But if the win was a deeply satisfying one, the gloss was surely removed by the way in which Sussex, having virtually got the match won at the half-way stage of their innings, lay down once the students were able to exert the tiniest hint of pressure. Neither side played brilliant cricket, but when steel was needed, it was Sussex who could not pass the mettle detector test.

One man who did, however, was Mark Chilton, an economics student at Durham and a member of the Lancashire playing staff. In fact all the students are on one county staff or another, so Sussex can at least console themselves that they were essentially beaten by a powerful county second team.

Having contributed a sensible 34 with the bat, Chilton then proceeded to take 5 for 26 with his occasional hut mesmerising medium-pace, as Sussex fell apart, losing their last six wickets for 69 runs in 11 overs.

Almost as crucial was the strangulating spell bowled by Steffan Jones in the middle of the innings. Jones, a tall strapping pace bowler who is also set to play rugby for Bristol, bowled his 10 overs for just 22 runs, including the crucial wicket of Keith Greenfield. It was a spell that was instrumental in getting the students back into the game.

After the messy blood-letting over the winter, this result will not be music to the new hierarchy's ears, though it may deflect attention from the latest squabble at Hove, which involves the relocation of their famous library into a Portakabin, currently inhabited by the coaching staff.

Indeed the chairman, Robin Marlar, was present yesterday, but left when Sussex appeared to be coasting to victory. Any-one who knows Marlar would not have wanted to be on the other end of last night's phone call. High on the agenda of explanations required will be why Vassert Drakes, clearly sent in to hit out, played straighter than Geoffrey Boycott.

Such convention was something that seemed to afflict the openers of both sides. Indeed, as the Universities' coach, Derek Randall, believed, their 217 would be adequate, particularly after the openers Ed Smith and Tim Hodgson, had soon followed him to the pavilion. He had, at least, completed his maiden B&H fifty.

They wobbled further when their captain, Steve Marsh, sliced a Kevin James delivery to gully him the Zimbabwean leg-spinner, Paul Strung, who had earlier proved difficult to bring to the crease, from saw them home.

And so to Matthew Bonk One. He teased the heart out of the Hampshire innings in four separate stumps, enticing and tempting the batsmen to do the unwise and that ensured Hampshire fell short of setting a challenging target.

Fortunately their sloth was compensated by some dashing middle-order strokeplay as Chilton, Will House and Umer Rashid added 109 in 16 overs to set a target that was more than adequate for Sussex's current frailty of mind.

### Benson and Hedges Cup

**One-day matches**  
**Middlesex v Essex**  
LORD'S: Essex won by one wicket.  
(Essex won toss)  
**MIDDLESEX**  
S P Morris lbw b Wright ..... 36  
P J Prichard c Prichard b Dutch ..... 36  
K P Dutch c Prichard b Coven ..... 55  
M R Ramprakash lbw b Grayson ..... 77  
"W" Gating lbw b Sut ..... 15  
J D Morris not out ..... 27  
R L Brown not out ..... 13  
R J Johnson c Rollins b Coven ..... 13  
J P Dott not out ..... 12  
A R C Fotheringham not out ..... 20  
Extras (10, 8, 6) ..... 22  
Total (for 8, 90 overs) ..... 227  
Fall (for 8, 90 overs) ..... 227  
Fall 1-43, 2-105, 3-153, 4-194, 5-134, 6-  
205, 7-210, 8-222, 9-225  
Bowling: Fotheringham 10-2-30-1; Heaton 10-53-  
2; Clarke 5-0-8-0; Backwell 5-0-38-0; Dean  
7-33-4; Roberts 4-0-45-3  
DORTMUND: Middlesex won by 12 runs  
K J Morris not out ..... 112  
C J Adams b Wright ..... 29  
"W" Gating lbw b Austin ..... 29  
V P Clarke not out ..... 4  
H M Nielsen not out ..... 42  
A F Giles b Felt ..... 13  
Total (for 8, 90 overs) ..... 228  
Fall (for 8, 90 overs) ..... 228  
Fall 1-43, 2-97, 3-130, 4-237  
Bowling: Gating 10-2-37-2; Schwartz 10-  
2-37-2; Morris 10-2-37-2; Heaton 10-0-  
35-1; Stump 10-0-31-1; Vaughan 4-0-15-1  
Somerset: J H Harris and A Clarkson  
OLD TRAFFORD: Derbyshire won by six wickets.  
Lancashire v Derbyshire

Warrington v Derby



